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# GENERAL SHERIDAN









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GENERAL SHERIDAN

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# GENERAL SHERIDAN

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BY  
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*WITH PORTRAIT AND MAPS*



NEW YORK  
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1895

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## P R E F A C E .

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IN composing, or, to speak more correctly, in compiling this short history of one of our most distinguished soldiers (for no value can attach to a work of this character unless it be taken from authoritative sources) the writer has verified all incidents and events connected with the civil war by reference to the official records of that conflict. It is needless to say that General Sheridan's Personal Memoirs have been freely used, and have furnished a large part of the information contained in these pages; and the interesting work of Colonel Newhall, *With Sheridan in Lee's Last Campaign*, has been of great value in writing the description of the events of which it treats.

H. E. D.

*August, 1894.*

[Within a month of the time when the author completed this work by the writing of the above fourteen lines, his highly honorable career of less than three-score years was closed by death. Henry Eugene Davies, eldest son of the well-known lawyer and jurist of that name, and a nephew of the distinguished mathematician Charles Davies, was born in

New York in 1836, and educated at Harvard and Columbia College, where he was graduated in 1857. He then studied law, was admitted to the bar, and began practice. In April, 1861, he entered the army as captain in the Fifth Regiment, New York Infantry, became major of the Second New York Cavalry in the same year, and subsequently its colonel. In September, 1863, he was made a brigadier general and served with distinction in the Cavalry Corps of the Army of the Potomac under Sheridan, his brigade being present in all that general's numerous battles. It was chiefly for this reason that General Davies was selected by the editor of this series, as the biographer of the hero of so many victories in the Shenandoah Valley and elsewhere in Virginia. In June, 1865, Davies was made a major general of volunteers, and commanded the Middle District of Alabama till his resignation, in the following January, when he returned to New York and resumed the practice of law. He was public administrator of New York city in 1866-'69, and assistant district attorney of the southern district of New York in 1870-'72. General Davies was among the earliest members of the military order of the Loyal Legion, having joined the New York Commandery in 1866. Owing to declining health the General retired from professional life, spending the last few years at his country seat at Fishkill-on-the-Hudson, which was also for more than a quarter of a century the summer home of his father, Judge Davies.

EDITOR.]



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# GENERAL SHERIDAN.

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## CHAPTER I.

### EARLY LIFE.—WEST POINT.—SERVICE IN TEXAS AND OREGON.

THE history of Lieutenant-General Philip H. Sheridan will describe a career from first to last exclusively that of a soldier. When, upon the retirement of General Sherman, in 1883, he succeeded to the command of the Army of the United States, he was the first to attain that rank whose whole life had been devoted to the profession of arms. General Scott and all his predecessors had not been educated as military men, but were appointed to the army from civil life, having been prepared for, and in most instances been engaged actively in, other pursuits before their entry into service.

McClellan, Halleck, Grant, and Sherman were educated at West Point, and served in the regular army for periods varying from eleven to fifteen years, but, with singular unanimity, each resigned from service almost immediately after obtaining the grade of captain, and were all engaged in various peaceful occupations until the outbreak of the civil war afforded an opportunity of returning to the

army, with rank much higher than they could possibly have attained through continuous service. With several of them political ambition was an important and, in some instances, controlling element in life, and the bitterest disappointment that Scott experienced during life was his failure in election to the presidency. No feeling of this nature ever affected or influenced General Sheridan, and through his life his energies and efforts were devoted to the faithful discharge of his military duties and to that purpose alone.

Sheridan was appointed to the army from the State of Ohio; that circumstance caused it to be generally believed that his birthplace was in that State, and for many years this impression prevailed. His autobiography, however, sets this question at rest, and from it we learn that his birthplace was Albany, in the State of New York, where he was born on March 6, 1831. His parents were natives of Ireland, who had come to this country the previous year in search of a prosperity they could not hope for in their native land. After spending some two years in Albany the family removed to Somerset, in Perry County, Ohio, which from that time was their permanent home.

The interesting details of his early life are fully given in the Personal Memoirs before referred to; and in that work he pays high tribute to the affectionate care and wise counsel he received from his mother during his earlier years. The opportunities of obtaining instruction in what was then a remote and partially settled country were of course few, but he obtained in the village schools such education as could be there afforded, and until the age of four-



teen was occupied in the study of history, geography, arithmetic, and grammar. This, as we are told by him, with the addition of personal reading and a few months of special preparation for the Military Academy, was all the education he had received until he began his course of study at West Point.

At the age of fourteen years he determined to do something for himself in life, and obtained employment in one of the village stores, and before three years had passed, after some change in his employers, was occupied as clerk and bookkeeper in the principal dry-goods shop of the place, at a salary which affords good evidence of his diligence and fidelity to duty. During these three years the war with Mexico occurred, and the accounts of battles and of military adventure that then occupied the public attention inspired him with soldierly ambition and a resolution to secure if possible an appointment as cadet at West Point, and to follow through life the profession of arms.

He had the good fortune to have some personal acquaintance with Mr. Ritchie, then member of Congress representing the district of which Perry County is a part, and was so well esteemed by that gentleman that a personal application, unaided by friends or political influence, secured him the coveted position, and he was appointed to the class of 1848.

Between the date of his appointment and that fixed for entering upon his duties a few months intervened, and these were passed in diligent study to prepare for the examination that should precede his entrance to the Academy, and with such success that on the 1st day of July, 1848, he was admitted to the Corps of Cadets, in a class of sixty-three

members, many of whom were in the future to become distinguished officers of our army during the civil war.

Of his life and studies at West Point there is no necessity to give a detailed account in these pages. One incident, indeed, did occur that nearly resulted in closing the career so auspiciously begun. In consequence of an affray with a cadet his superior in military rank, caused by the overbearing conduct of the latter, he incurred the censure of the authorities and stood charged with a grave offense. Fortunately his previous excellent record was considered in imposing a penalty, and he escaped with the comparatively mild punishment of suspension for one year, a sentence which at that time he considered extremely harsh, but has since admitted to have been just, if not lenient.

After a year passed at his home he returned to West Point in August, 1852, and joined the class that graduated in the following year, and on the 1st day of July, 1853, he was graduated thirty-fifth in a class of fifty-two members, and received his first commission as brevet second lieutenant in the First Regiment of United States Infantry, which was then stationed in Texas.

After a six months' tour of duty at the recruiting rendezvous at Newport barracks, Kentucky, Lieutenant Sheridan received orders in March, 1854, to report for active service at Fort Duncan, Texas, a frontier post on the Rio Grande River, now known as Eagle Pass, about two hundred and fifty miles westward from the coast. A long and tedious journey, involving a voyage by steamboat to New Orleans, thence by steamer and sailing vessel to Corpus

Christi, Texas, and by wagon train to Fort Duncan, was the route pursued, and he finally reported there and was assigned to duty.

He was soon ordered to an outpost camp, and the first summer of active service was spent in scouting, mapping the country, and in protecting the roads and different stations from the attacks of Indians, who at that time were numerous and hostile. The neighboring Mexican frontier, beyond which, of course, our troops could not follow, gave these enemies a sure place of refuge, and in several instances when pursued they escaped punishment by taking flight into the Mexican territory.

In the winter his company was recalled to Fort Duncan, and he passed that season in a hut constructed by himself of poles covered with condemned canvas, which, however primitive, was, he says, more comfortable in that season than the tents in which other officers were lodged. The hardships of army life, even in time of peace, were in those days actual and real, and, from the description he gives, life could have had but few comforts at a frontier post. Barracks for men and officers did not exist; the rations for all were but salt pork, fresh beef, flour, and such game as could be secured by frequent hunting parties; no fresh vegetables could be had, and constant precautions had to be taken to prevent scurvy.

This life, with the variety afforded by an occasional scout or a pursuit of hostile Indians, continued until the fall of 1854, when his promotion to the rank of second lieutenant in the Fourth Infantry relieved him from duty in Texas. His orders required him to join his regiment at Fort Reading, in

the northern part of California, and, strange as it may seem to-day, the most practicable as well as the quickest route to that point was then by way of New York, thence by the Pacific mail steamers *via* the Isthmus of Panama to San Francisco, and then by land to the designated post.

On reaching New York he was placed in charge of a large party of recruits at that post, and kept on that duty until July, 1855, when he started upon his journey with this detachment, and in due course reached Fort Reading. At this post he was met by orders directing him to relieve the officer in command of a party of mounted troops, forming part of an exploring expedition under Lieutenant Williamson, of the United States Engineers, which was ordered to survey and lay out a railway route from Fort Reading northward to Portland, Ore.

The expedition had started some days before Sheridan reached his post, and he had some difficulty in prevailing upon the commanding officer to allow him to follow on its trail, as the country was full of hostile Indians, and any small party passing through it incurred great danger of being cut off. Leave to proceed was finally granted, and with a corporal and two privates he started on horseback to overtake Lieutenant Williamson's party, which he reached on the third day of his march, after a narrow escape from capture by a band of Indians that was following the expedition. On reaching Williamson's camp on August, 4, 1855, Sheridan took command of the mounted force of the party, relieving Lieutenant Hood, since prominent as a lieutenant general in the Confederate army, and may thus be said to have begun his career as a cavalry officer with a

detachment of some fifty mounted men of the First Dragoons.

As he mentions in his memoir, he found at first some difficulty in controlling the men of this command, which was composed of small detachments from different companies of the regiment, and thus lacked the regular organization that aids so much in securing discipline. Besides this, the men did not like the change that deprived them of an officer of their own regiment, and placed them under the command of one from the infantry, a feeling that is natural, too, and well recognized by all who have been in the mounted service.

This dissatisfaction, however, lasted but for a brief period, and strict discipline, hard work, and careful attention to the needs and comfort of the troopers soon brought them into excellent condition, and for twelve months that they remained under his immediate command they were all that the most exacting officer could desire, and their service and good conduct have received his high commendation. The expedition was unopposed, and in October reached Portland, Ore., having completed the survey for which it was designed.

After a short rest in camp at Fort Vancouver, Lieutenant Sheridan, with his dragoons, was attached to an expedition under the command of Major Rains that was intended to operate against the Yakima Indians, who had attacked and defeated a small force of United States troops previously sent against them. This expedition started from camp on the 30th of October and penetrated as far as the Yakima River, in the Territory of Washington, but though Indians were seen in numbers, and could have been

successfully attacked, the excessive caution and strategic plans of the commanding officer prevented any engagement with them, although he was strongly urged by his subordinates on several occasions to authorize attacks that had every promise of success.

This movement resulted in nothing but hardship to the troops, who, after entering the enemy's country, were compelled by the advancing winter to return, and after a long and difficult march, which was particularly severe upon the cavalry, who were obliged to break a road for the infantry over mountain trails through snow often six feet deep, the old camps were reached, and no further effort was made until the following spring. The successive failures of our troops to accomplish anything against the Indians had added greatly to their audacity and enterprise, and many other tribes had been encouraged to join those already hostile, so that the whole country on the Columbia River east of the Cascades was in a state of insurrection, and a strong force of troops and active operations were required to reduce it to subjection.

The Ninth Infantry, commanded by Colonel Wright, was ordered to Portland, and an expedition under this officer proceeded in March, 1856, up the Columbia River by steamer as far as the town of Dalles, whence it was intended to begin operations in the field. Sheridan's dragoons, though intended to form a part of this force, had not left their camp at Fort Vancouver, when a large band of the hostile Indians made an unexpected attack on the settlements at the Cascades of the Columbia, midway between Vancouver and the Dalles, and, after killing some of the settlers, besieged the survivors in a



blockhouse that had been built at the Middle Cascade, and the few cabins that stood at the Upper Cascade. These defensive posts were successfully held, but the landing at the Lower Cascades was strongly occupied by the savages, and all communication between the troops at Dalles and Fort Vancouver, their base of supplies, was prevented.

Sheridan was immediately ordered with his detachment of dragoons—some forty effective men—to proceed to the relief of the blockhouse at the Middle Cascade, and at once prepared for the enterprise. Knowing that he must meet an enemy greatly superior in numbers, he felt the necessity of having at least one piece of artillery with his small force; but no cannon were to be had at Vancouver, and he would have been compelled to proceed without one, but at the last moment he recalled the fact that the steamer which plied between San Francisco and Portland, and which happened then to be at the latter post, was provided with a small iron gun, mounted on a wooden platform, and used in firing salutes. This he succeeded in borrowing for the occasion, and, luckily finding in the arsenal at the fort a supply of solid shot, he started, with his command dismounted and carried upon a steamer, up the Columbia River in the early morning of March 27th. On reaching the Lower Cascades—some thirty-five miles from Fort Vancouver—he disembarked his men and gun on the north bank of the river and approached the position occupied by the Indians, who were in strong force in his front and intercepting his road to the blockhouse at the Middle Cascade, also on the northern bank. A reconnoissance soon showed that the savages were too numerous and too

strongly posted to justify a direct attack upon their position, while the repulse of an attack by the Indians, to which the borrowed gun gave great assistance, assured Sheridan that he could safely maintain his ground. The remainder of the day was passed in desultory skirmishing with no serious injury to either party, and during the night a new plan was developed.

The steamer had returned to Vancouver to report the condition of affairs, but left with the detachment a large boat or bateau, of capacity sufficient to transport twenty men and the gun. An island of considerable size occupied the center of the stream and concealed the southern bank of the river from observation by the Indians, and it was determined that at dawn the command should cross to the southern bank, and, towing the boat along the shore through the rapids, ascend the river to a point where it would be possible to cross to the blockhouse at the Middle Cascade. In the morning the crossing was successfully made but on attempting to tow the boat along the bank the stream was found so rapid and the shore so obstructed with rocks that no progress could be made. The bank of the island, however, was observed to be more practicable, and Sheridan therefore, with the boat, his piece of artillery, and ten men, recrossed to its southern shore, and, directing the remainder of his men to march up the river bank, he proceeded to move forward with the boat. In this manner, protected from observation by the island, the boat was successfully brought through the rapids into smooth water, and, rejoining the party marching on the river's bank, the entire command was carried over to the blockhouse and

posted in the rear of the enemy that had prevented their progress on the previous day.

Soon after this a portion of Colonel Wright's force arrived from Dalles, whence it had marched on learning of the outbreak, and an attack on the enemy was at once begun. Sheridan, anticipating that the island in the river would be used as a refuge by those of the hostiles who were river Indians and provided with canoes, while the Yakimas, if they fled, would return to their own mountains, suggested that he be allowed to return to the island and act against such of the Indians as might seek shelter there. This was ordered, and with his forty men and a mountain howitzer he returned there. As expected, a large body of the river Indians—men, women, and children—was found on the island, and they had been so alarmed and demoralized by the vigorous movements of our troops and the desertion of their allies, the Yakimas, who had abandoned them in flying to the mountains, that they surrendered without a contest. Among the warriors were found many who had taken an active part in the murder of the settlers, and nine of the ringleaders were soon afterward hung for their crime.

This prompt and vigorous action against the hostiles and the punishment that followed had the effect of breaking up the confederation of the Indians, and no further conflicts occurred, though a portion of our troops were for some time occupied in pursuing and reducing to submission those who had been engaged in the outbreak. For his services in this affair Lieutenant Sheridan was specially mentioned for gallantry by General Scott in orders from Headquarters of the Army.

In the latter part of April, 1856, Sheridan was ordered with his dragoons to the Coast Indian Reservation, near Dayton, in Yam Hill County, Oregon, to establish a post and control the Indians, some fifteen hundred, there collected. A small force of infantry was already on the ground, and, as the only commissioned officer, Sheridan took command. He devoted himself to the work of putting up the buildings required for the post, providing for his troops, and guarding and keeping in order the Indians in his charge, and for some months acted as commandant, quartermaster, and commissary.

He was relieved of the first of these duties in July by the arrival at the post of Captain D. A. Russell, Fourth Infantry, who had been assigned to the command, and about this time was deprived of his detachment of dragoons, which was returned to its own regiment. He has paid a high tribute of praise to their efficient and faithful service, and parted with them with a regret that was mutual, little thinking, as he says in the Personal Memoirs, that in the course of a few years it would be his fortune to have another cavalry command, that in numbers would far exceed the then existing army of the United States. The remainder of his service on the Pacific coast was not marked by events of any striking interest, but is a record of faithful and active work in many departments of military duty, and is remarkable for one fact: that though holding only the rank of a second lieutenant, Sheridan was for the greater part of the time exercising independent commands.

Acting as a quartermaster, he built posts and blockhouses and laid out and constructed roads;

as a commissary he was called on to distribute to troops and large bodies of reservation Indians supplies of every description; and, as the commanding officer of small but important posts, to preserve discipline among his soldiers, to keep in subjection and under control large numbers of recently hostile Indians, and frequently to repress and punish attempted outbreaks among them.

All these varied duties were thoroughly performed, and, as the records show, in a manner that was satisfactory to his superior officers and that deserved and secured their approval. This life continued until the outbreak of the war of the rebellion and the changes that were caused by the removal of troops to the scene of conflict, the large increase of the regular army, and consequent promotions of officers then in the service. The Fourth Infantry was soon ordered to the East, and with it went Sheridan's company, but he was left at Fort Yam Hill, the post he had last occupied, with orders to remain until relieved by an officer of the Ninth Regiment of Infantry, whose company was to take the place of the former garrison.

Having learned, however, that this officer had declared his sympathy with those engaged in rebellion, and satisfied by his conduct on reaching the post that no confidence could be placed in his loyalty, Sheridan refused to surrender to him the command, and continued in charge until another officer arrived, by whom, on the 1st of September, 1861, he was relieved, and, to his great satisfaction, enabled to proceed to the seat of war.

Before this date a large addition to the regular army had been made. To fill vacancies in the new



regiments, rapid promotions among the officers already in service had occurred, and since April Sheridan had risen from second lieutenant to the rank of captain of the Thirteenth Infantry, an advancement that a year before could hardly have been gained by fifteen years of continuous service.

He was ordered to join his new regiment, the headquarters of which were at Jefferson Barracks, near St. Louis, and on leaving his post he went as rapidly as possible through San Francisco and the Isthmus of Panama to New York, and thence to St. Louis, stopping on the way for twenty hours at his home in Ohio, which he had not visited since the year of his graduation in 1855.

What has been written completes the record of the service of General Sheridan in the army previous to his taking part in the great war, in which he won such high distinction; and, while in contrast to further and far more illustrious actions of his, it may be thought that too much time and space has been devoted to a narrative of service and conduct in themselves of no great import or worthy of especial mention, this relation is of value as showing the training his mind had received in early days, and the development of the qualities that particularly distinguished him as a great commander, while by far the youngest among those who stood in the first rank of our leaders.

The title of veteran is an honorable one for a soldier to bear, and it is well recognized that experience is a necessity to fit an officer for the arduous duties of a high command, but from many disastrous lessons that were given to our people in the course of the civil war it was learned that neither continu-

ous service nor long experience will of itself develop an enterprising, active, and successful leader. On the contrary, bitter experience during the course of that war showed that the officer who after many long years of instruction and discipline under capable superiors had become an efficient subordinate and able to perform with credit the duties of such a position, often became, when thrown upon his own resources and called to exercise a command of great responsibility, inactive and distrustful of his own powers. He felt the want of the immediate and directing authority to which the habits of a lifetime had accustomed him, and was unable to act with vigor in affairs which demanded personal responsibility and where success depended on his own intensity and force. It is needless here to refer to many instances when officers of this class placed in high commands were remarkable for nothing intense but inactivity, and from whom no movement or action could be obtained unless they were spurred forward by the peremptory orders of a distant and often misinformed superior, or forced to do something for their own protection by the vigorous attacks of an alert and enterprising enemy.

The experience of General Sheridan, though of course upon a limited scale, was large if not long. He had been under fire, had commanded cavalry and infantry, and knew from actual observation what could be done with artillery in action; he had served as a quartermaster and commissary, and was thus familiar with the details of furnishing all needed supplies to troops, and, while he had never had at any time but a few soldiers under his orders, the duty of controlling and keeping in subjection large

bodies of Indians on the different reservations in his charge had assisted much in giving him the habit of command, and of impressing the force of his own personality upon those over whom he was placed. It will also be seen that during these years of preparation for the greater efforts of his life he was generally in an independent command, and for whatever action he undertook obliged of necessity to rely upon his personal judgment and his own opinion of what was best to be done in any existing emergency.



## CHAPTER II.

### STAFF DUTY.—COLONEL OF CAVALRY.—BRIGADIER GENERAL.

THE Thirteenth Infantry, to which Sheridan had been promoted, was at the time of his arrival at headquarters but partially organized, and there was little prospect of its being soon ready to take the field, as the heavy calls for volunteer troops had rendered recruiting for the regular service a tedious task. Soon after Sheridan's arrival at Jefferson Barracks he was selected by General Halleck, then in chief command in St. Louis, as the president of a board of officers whose duty it was to audit the confused mass of accounts and claims for quartermasters' and subsistence supplies that had accumulated under the loose administration of General Frémont, and had been left to his successor for adjustment. To a young and ardent soldier whose instincts and desires prompted him most strongly to seek service in the field, a duty of this nature was not very acceptable, but, being in the regular course of service, it was undertaken and thoroughly performed. In this he was engaged until December 26, 1861, when he was assigned to duty as Chief Commissary of the Army of Southwest Missouri, then at Rolla, Mo., and being organized for the

campaign that was successfully closed by the battle of Pea Ridge.

With his innate desire to accomplish successfully whatever work was intrusted to his charge, and knowing that the army to which he was assigned would be compelled to live off the country, he foresaw that, unless he had control of the transportation of subsistence, there would be great difficulty in properly feeding the troops; he therefore applied to be also assigned as chief quartermaster, a request that after explanation was granted. His duties in this double capacity were severe, involving as they did not only the supply of the daily wants of an army of thirteen thousand men, but the organization on a systematic basis of arming troops in which at that time but little discipline existed of a practical military method.

With great difficulty, and in the face of strong opposition, he at last succeeded, and secured sufficient transportation for his supplies, and established the means of procuring and distributing them. To feed the troops both in camp and on the march it was needed to collect beef, cattle, and grain from the surrounding country, and to take possession of, put in order, and operate abandoned mills. All this work was performed, and the army was amply supplied during the march to and the successful action at Pea Ridge, Ark., on the 5th of March, 1862.

A few days after this action differences that had arisen between himself and General Curtis—arising from complaints of subordinate officers, to whom strict discipline and rigid accountability were distasteful—resulted in his application to be relieved, and he reported again to General Halleck, feeling,

as he has said, somewhat discouraged by the uncertainty of his future, but found occupation for a few weeks in another detail—the purchase of horses in the Northwest.

Knowing that this was but a temporary duty, and reluctant to be sent to his regiment, which was still recruiting at Jefferson Barracks, he made an earnest application for assignment to any duty that would take him into the field; and shortly after the battle of Shiloh he was ordered to report for staff duty to General Halleck, who was then cautiously advancing toward Corinth.

This did not meet his wishes, but was a step in advance, as it at least placed him in the front and nearer the scene of active operations. Nor were his duties after reporting more suited to his desire for military employment, as the first work placed in his charge was that of building roads and bringing up the supply trains to the army; and this was followed by an appointment as quartermaster to the headquarters of General Halleck. These duties were trying and laborious, and his best efforts in them could promise nothing of promotion or distinction, yet he discharged them with ability and zeal, at the same time anxiously looking forward for some better opportunity to arise.

At last, and most unexpectedly to him, the long-desired opportunity for active service occurred; on the 27th of May, 1862, he was offered the command of a regiment of cavalry, and his career as a leader in the army of the Union began. The Second Regiment of Michigan Cavalry, which was in the army commanded by General Halleck, had lost its colonel, and had become somewhat demoralized

from dissensions between the officers and sickness among the men. The Governor of the State had determined that the best way to restore it to efficiency would be by the appointment of a stranger, and, if possible, a regular officer, to the command, who, uninfluenced by any personal feeling and having had no part in previous difficulties, could exercise an impartial authority and restore good discipline.

By whom the suggestion was made of Captain Sheridan as a suitable officer for this purpose is not known, but on the day referred to two officers of this regiment rode up to the headquarters where Sheridan was on duty and handed him a telegraphic order from the Governor of Michigan, announcing his appointment as colonel of the Second Michigan Cavalry, and containing instructions for him to immediately assume command. Thus surprisingly was the career he had so long looked forward to opened before him; but even then, when his foot might be said to be in the stirrup, an obstacle was presented.

On applying to General Halleck for leave to accept the position so unexpectedly offered, that officer, possibly from an unwillingness to lose an efficient quartermaster who had contributed much to his personal comfort, and also, doubtless, from his natural reluctance to do anything when a negative line of conduct was open to him, expressed himself as unwilling to allow acceptance of the appointment until the consent of the War Department could be obtained.

As in those days the policy of this department was strongly opposed to the appointment of officers in the regular service to volunteer commands, there was slight prospect of such an application being

approved, and it seemed at first as if the proffered promotion must be declined. However, after a consultation with the officers who had brought the order of appointment, in which the present condition of the regiment was explained and the pressing need of a capable commanding officer shown, the application to General Halleck was renewed and the reasons given, with the expression of Sheridan's earnest desire for active service, he at length succeeded in procuring permission to accept the offered commission. That same day he turned over the property for which he was responsible to his successor, and no duty in which he had been engaged had ever been performed with more alacrity than this last official act, which closed his service as a staff officer.

At eight o'clock that night he appeared at the camp of his regiment, which he found under arms and preparing to start out on an expedition, and he had but time to meet the officers and assume command when the trumpets sounded "To horse," and he led out his men, whom he had not had the opportunity yet to see. Reporting his regiment to the brigade commander as ready for duty, he set out on the march confidently and cheerily.

He has told us of the manner in which he started, utterly unprovided, on this his first expedition, with personal equipment, and wearing his uniform as a captain of infantry, to which, to meet the requirements of his new commission, he had added in haste the shoulder straps of a colonel of cavalry, loaned him by an obliging friend, and for sole provision a small haversack tied to his saddle, containing some coffee, sugar, bacon, and hard bread. At this time and under these circumstances he may be said to



have first entered on the path that led to the highest military rank that his country could offer.

The war had continued for more than a year before the opportunity of active service and of exercising even the lowest command was presented, and that year had been passed in hard and distasteful work, which, though important, afforded no prospect of distinction and no fitting employment for the abilities he possessed.

The officers with whom he was now to serve and with whom he was to be compared had profited by the active service in which they had been engaged and the experience they had acquired, and all of any prominence with whom he was now to compete, and many of whom he was subsequently to command, were his superiors in rank.

The expedition on which Colonel Sheridan so hastily set out was ordered to march to the south of Corinth and destroy, as far as practicable, the railroads and rolling stock that might be of use to the Confederate troops in the retreat that it was now known they intended to make. The force consisted of a small brigade of cavalry commanded by Colonel Elliott and comprised but two regiments—that of Sheridan and the Fourth Iowa Cavalry; and while the duty to which it was assigned was thoroughly performed, there was not much of interest that requires description. Making a wide circuit to the eastward of Corinth, the railroad running south from that point was reached, after a rapid march of some sixty miles, at Booneville, twenty-two miles south of Corinth, and a small force of the enemy was easily driven away from the road. A large section of the railroad was torn up and the rails heated and bent

so they could not be relaid, and the Confederates were thus deprived of the use of the road in their retreat from Corinth. While this work was progressing it was learned from prisoners that the evacuation of Corinth had already begun, and as at any time the small force engaged might encounter some of the retreating columns of the enemy, it became necessary to abandon the work in hand. Twenty-six cars, containing arms, ammunition, and clothing, were intercepted at the break in the road and destroyed with their contents. Several thousand prisoners had been taken, consisting mainly of the stragglers and the sick and wounded, who are always found in the rear of an advancing army and in the front of one that is retreating; but these had to be abandoned, as there was no means of bringing them into our lines by the route that must be taken to return to Halleck's command.

The troops, by another circuit around the main force of the enemy, returned to their old camp, having marched in all about one hundred and eighty miles in four days, and though engaged in frequent skirmishes had sustained but slight loss. Here it was learned that Corinth had been, as was supposed, evacuated, and after one night's rest the brigade was ordered to the front to take part in the pursuit of the retreating army.

This operation, if it had been conducted with energy and skill, would have inflicted great loss upon the enemy at a time when their troops were much disheartened and almost destitute of supplies, but no effort was made to press the enemy heavily or to bring on an engagement, and all that occurred in the course of the retreat were a few slight and unpro-

ductive skirmishes between the extreme advances of the cavalry and the enemy's rear guards. Some stragglers, wounded, and deserters, nearly all of whom came of their own accord within our lines, were the sole results of what should have been a serious and important operation, and the enemy escaped, suffering no real loss other than that caused by the destruction of his cars and supplies at Booneville by Colonel Elliott's brigade of two regiments. Promotion, when it once began, was not slow, and on June 11th the removal of Colonel Elliott to other duties was the cause of placing Sheridan in command of the brigade, and also giving him the opportunity of knowing his men and officers and preparing them for future efforts.

Throughout his military life a marked feature of his record in the many commands he held was the confidence and trust reposed in him by all who served under him, and the cheerful and prompt obedience that his every order received. The importance of this feeling among troops he well understood, and at this period, and after, he always sought to inspire and maintain it, and the manner in which this was regarded by him and the methods by which he endeavored to secure it are well worthy of note, and not only present ideas that, acted on, contributed much to his own success, but furnish a valuable lesson to others who may follow the profession of arms.

His Personal Memoirs, in the portion that relates to this his first command, describes his thoughts upon this subject and the means adopted to this end, and well deserves quotation: "Although but a few days had elapsed from the date of my appointment as colonel of the Second Michigan to that of succeed-



ing to the command of the brigade, I believe I can say with propriety that I had firmly established myself in the confidence of the officers and men of the regiment, and won their regard by thoughtful care. I had striven unceasingly to have them well fed and well clothed, had personally looked after the selection of their camps, and had maintained such a discipline as to allay former irritation.

“Men who march, scout, and fight, and suffer all the hardships that fall to the lot of soldiers in the field, in order to do vigorous work must have the best bodily sustenance and every comfort that can be provided. I knew, from practical experience on the frontier, that my efforts in this direction would not only be appreciated, but requited by personal affection and gratitude, and, further, that such exertions would bring the best results to me. Whenever my authority would permit I saved my command from needless sacrifices and unnecessary toil; therefore, when hard or daring work was to be done, I expected the heartiest response and always got it. Soldiers are averse to seeing their comrades killed without compensating results, and none realize more quickly than they the blundering that often takes place on the field of battle. They want some tangible indemnity for the loss of life, and as victory is an offset, the value of which is manifest, it not only makes them content to shed their blood, but also furnishes evidence of capacity in those who command them. My regiment had lost very few men since coming under my command, but it seemed in the eyes of all who belonged to it that casualties to the enemy, and some slight successes for us, had repaid every sacrifice, and in consequence I had gained not only

their confidence as soldiers, but also their esteem and love as men, and to a degree far beyond what I then realized."

Toward the end of June he was ordered with the brigade to occupy a position at Booneville, the scene of his previous capture of the enemy's trains, and to cover the front of the main army, which was some twenty miles in his rear. Appreciating the exposed and dangerous position occupied by his small force, which in all did not exceed nine hundred men, the surrounding country was thoroughly scouted, and he utilized the instruction in drawing that the Military Academy had furnished to prepare a map of the district around his camp that gave details of all features that would be useful for attack or defense, and of all the approaches by which an enemy could gain access to his position. His position was hazardous, as he was entirely without support, and many miles from any point from which a re-enforcement could be hoped, and indications were frequent that the enemy was intending a renewal of offensive operations, and the event soon showed the necessity of his precautions and the value of the preparation for defense that he had made.

Early in the morning of July 1st a large cavalry force advanced on Booneville from the westward and struck Sheridan's picket at a point some three and a half miles from the camp. The outpost was not surprised, but by overpowering numbers was forced back slowly while skirmishing in every available position, until a point was reached where a defensive line could be formed, and was there met by the greater part of the brigade, which had been moved out from camp to meet the enemy. Two

direct attacks were repulsed, and the enemy began then to take advantage of his great superiority of numbers, making a flanking movement to our left which, when developed, would have exposed the camp and trains and have compelled a retreat with the loss of many supplies, and which could only be successfully prevented by a vigorous offensive movement.

In the examination of the country that had been made a circuitous wood road had been discovered that led to the rear of the enemy's position, and Sheridan at once determined to send a mounted detachment by this path to make an attack in rear, while with the main body of his troops he would at the same time advance with the whole force at his disposal. An hour was allowed for the movement to the rear to be made, and during that time the enemy was held in check by hard fighting. The small force of four companies sent to the rear succeeded in reaching the designated point, and captured the Confederate headquarters, following this success with a determined charge upon the rear of the enemy's column. At the same time a strong attack was made from the front, and as this was commenced, by a happy chance, a locomotive with some cars loaded with forage came into Booneville from the depot at Corinth. The engineer was ordered to make a liberal use of his whistle, and the impression was given both to our troops and, the enemy that trains were arriving with re-enforcements. Surprised by the attack in rear and heavily pressed in front by what was believed to be a much superior force, the enemy soon gave way, and in a short time his force was entirely broken up and flying over the country

in all directions, pursued by our troops for four miles, and until night prevented further movement. Sheridan's force engaged in this action was in all but eight hundred and twenty-seven men, while that of the enemy was at the least five thousand.

This victory was the more gratifying to the successful leader of our troops, as when he applied early in the day to his immediate superior for re-enforcements he had received instructions to retire from Booneville without risking an engagement and devote all effort to the saving of his transportation. For his conduct and that of his men in this engagement he was thanked in general orders by General Rosecrans, then commanding the Army of the Mississippi, and a successful skirmish at Rienzi and an important and successful expedition into the enemy's lines in search of information during the month of July added to his growing reputation as an enterprising and successful officer; and so well during his brief term of command had he merited and obtained the confidence of his superiors that on July 30, 1862, the following telegram was sent to the Headquarters of the Army :

“HEADQUARTERS, ARMY OF THE MISSISSIPPI,

“*July 30, 1862.*

“MAJOR-GENERAL HALLECK, *Washington, D. C. :*

“Brigadiers scarce. Good ones scarcer. As both goes on the month's leave you gave him ten months since. Granger has temporary command. The undersigned respectfully beg that you will obtain the promotion of Sheridan. He is worth his weight in gold. His Ripley expedition has brought us captured letters of immense value, as well as pris-

oners, showing the rebel plans and dispositions, as you will learn from District Commander—

“W. S. ROSECRANS, *Brigadier General*.

“C. C. SULLIVAN, *Brigadier General*.

“G. GRANGER, *Brigadier General*.

“W. L. ELLIOTT, *Brigadier General*.

“A. ASBOTH, *Brigadier General*.”

The records of our armies show no other instance of so cordial and earnest a recommendation of an officer for promotion made by those under whom he had served, and whose disinterested opinions were given unasked and solely for the advantage of the public service, and such a request is the best possible commendation of the value of Sheridan's service in this army. During the period referred to, the Army of the Mississippi, the headquarters of which had been at Corinth, was being rapidly dispersed, and the enemy had reorganized and equipped their armies at the West.

While our Army of the Ohio, under General Buell, was slowly making its way eastward to Chattanooga, the Confederate General Bragg had collected an army of sufficient strength to justify an effort to obtain possession of Middle Tennessee and Kentucky, and was marching rapidly toward the Ohio River with the hope of striking first at Louisville, and, if successful, to follow up the blow by an attack on Cincinnati. To defend these threatened points required the concentration of a large force in his front, and while in the eastward of his line of march Buell was pressing toward Louisville by forced marches, large detachments of troops were taken from our Western armies and ordered to that place.

Sheridan was placed in command of a force comprising his own regiment, four others of infantry, and a battery of artillery, and was ordered to proceed at once to Louisville or Cincinnati, as necessity might require. He marched with his troops to Corinth, September 6th, and, going by railroad to Columbus, Ky., embarked his command on steamers and proceeded up the Ohio River until within a short distance of Cincinnati, when he was ordered to return to Louisville and, retaining command of his infantry and such other troops as might be sent to him, to report for orders to General Nelson, then in command of that city. On reporting at Louisville, which he reached on the 14th of September, he was ordered to encamp his troops south of the city, and at the same time received the news that he had been appointed a brigadier general of volunteers, with rank from July 1, 1862, the date of the battle of Booneville.

While in camp near Louisville his force was increased by the addition of eight recently organized regiments of infantry and a second battery of artillery, and his regiment of cavalry was detached and sent to a cavalry division, a separation that was unavoidable, but which caused a sorrowful parting between the troops which had formed his first active command and with whom his first success had been obtained, and a leader whom they loved and honored. The exigencies of an active campaign leave little time for the indulgence of sentiment and reflection, and the equipment, drill, and discipline of the large number of untrained troops now in the command required the utmost efforts of their chief. Events moved rapidly, and on the 25th of September

General Buell with his army reached Louisville, a winner in the long and hotly contested race between himself and Bragg, and, being then strongly re-enforced, was able to act offensively against his competitor. The troops already at Louisville were immediately incorporated with the Army of the Ohio, and the force under General Sheridan was designated as the Eleventh Division of that army, to the command of which he was assigned four months from the date of his appointment as a colonel.

### CHAPTER III.

#### ARMY OF THE OHIO.—PERRYVILLE.—MURFREESBOROUGH.

THE movements of the Army of the Ohio under General Buell exhibit evidence of deficiencies in organization, discipline, and leadership, and nothing can go further to show this than the record of the connection with these operations of Captain Charles C. Gilbert, First United States Infantry, who at the battle of Perryville commanded the Third Corps of the army. In the summer of 1862 General Nelson was from illness or wounds incapacitated for active duty in command of the troops collecting at Louisville, and on the application of two officers of his force, who were next to him in rank, and who distrusted their own ability to exercise a high command, Major-General Wright, then commanding the department, issued on September 1st an extraordinary general order in which it was announced that "Captain C. C. Gilbert, First Infantry, U. S. A., is hereby appointed a major general of volunteers, subject to the approval of the President of the United States, and is assigned to the command of the Army of Kentucky during the temporary absence of Major-General Nelson." It appears now hardly credible, but it is nevertheless a fact, that in



consequence of this authorization, Captain Gilbert assumed for himself the uniform and rank of a major general, and with perfect gravity and self-assurance took possession of General Nelson's vacant command, which he held for some ten days or two weeks, until relieved by the return of that officer to duty.

He apparently did not consider that relief from duty deprived him of the exalted rank to which the order of General Wright and his own assumption had raised him, and remained at Louisville for some time without active duty, appearing as an officer of the rank he claimed to hold, and signing official documents with that title. That he could not have been long self-deceived as to his actual position in the service is evident from the fact that on the 9th of September he was actually and legally appointed by the President as a brigadier general of volunteers, and a few days after was as such, in orders of Headquarters of the Army, ordered to report for duty to General Wright at Cincinnati. He appears to have been reluctant, however, to voluntarily relinquish his high estate, and upon the reorganization of the Army of the Ohio was, as a major general, assigned to the command of the Third Army Corps, in which Sheridan's division was included, and actually commanded that corps until after the battle of Perryville, recognized as a major general by all interested, and signing himself officially by his supposed rank, while at the time a brigadier general only, and junior in rank to five officers of that grade, who were placed under his command.

General Buell, in the proceedings of the court of inquiry that subsequently investigated the conduct

of this campaign, admitted his responsibility for the selection of this corps commander, which he excused by the existing need of an officer of high rank for that position, and his belief that General Gilbert was entitled to the rank he had assumed, stating also that as soon as the facts were known to him he immediately relieved him from command. General Gilbert's career as a general officer, it may be added, was brief; the Senate having failed to confirm his appointment as brigadier general, he was, in March, 1863, returned to his former position in the service as a captain of infantry.

Such was Sheridan's immediate superior at this period, and under his command he marched from Louisville on October 1st, when the army moved to meet the Confederate forces under General Bragg, who was then believed to be at Bardstown, Ky. From this place Bragg withdrew as our troops advanced, but was finally overtaken at Perryville, some sixty miles southeast of Louisville, which our army reached on the night of October 7th, after a slow and tedious march.

The plans of the general in command of our army were to engage the enemy on the 9th after spending the preceding day in advantageously disposing his troops, but these were frustrated by the enemy, who preferred to do his fighting on the 8th. During the night of the 7th Sheridan, who with his division formed the advance of Gilbert's corps, was directed to push forward a portion of his command beyond a small stream in his front, called Doctor's Creek, possession of which was required to provide the troops with water, for the want of which the men were suffering greatly.

At daylight on the 8th, with a brigade and a battery, he moved over the stream, driving off with slight skirmishing the enemy there posted, but found the ground could not be held unless a range of hills called Chaplin Heights, still farther to the front, was occupied. Bringing up the other two brigades of the division, two were placed in line, and by a sharp attack these heights were carried and a good position well to the front secured, which was immediately intrenched with a strong line of rifle pits. An advance of one brigade still farther to the front developed the enemy in strong form and evidently preparing for an attack upon our lines, and the advanced brigade was withdrawn within the intrenched line.

During the skirmishing caused by these movements he was frequently cautioned by signals from his corps commander not to bring on an engagement—an instruction often received in the early part of the war by energetic officers from superiors profoundly learned in strategy—to which he constantly replied that while he was not bringing on an engagement, the enemy evidently intended so to do, and that an attack in heavy force was to be expected. This condition of affairs in Sheridan's front continued until about noon, when from the high ground he occupied he could see on his left the First Corps, commanded by General A. McD. McCook, advancing in such form that it appeared to be ignorant of the strong force of the enemy in our front.

An attempt was made to inform them of the situation by signals, but this did not succeed, and a sudden assault upon the advancing troops threw them into confusion and pushed them back a con-

siderable distance, inflicting such loss of men and guns that the corps was unable to resume the offensive during the day. It was, however, soon reformed in a defensive position, and during the remainder of the day successfully resisted further attacks, which continued until four in the afternoon. To relieve the pressure on General McCook's front, Sheridan advanced a battery and six regiments to his own left, which by an enfilading fire on the enemy caused considerable loss and successfully checked his advance.

This led to an attack on Sheridan's front by two batteries and a large body of infantry, that caused him to again withdraw his line within the intrenchments that had been prudently constructed in the earlier part of the day, the value of which was now evident. The Confederates made a bold assault, though exposed to the canister firing of two batteries and the musketry of the whole division, and almost reached our lines.

Our firing was, however, too heavy to be resisted, and they were obliged to fall back. Sheridan, who by this time had been re-enforced by a brigade from another division of the Third Corps, immediately advanced and drove the enemy back to Perryville, and again obtained a favorable position to establish his batteries and use them against the force engaged with General McCook. This attack in flank and the stout resistance of McCook's troops were more than the enemy could support, and he shortly withdrew from the field, the engagement ending at about four in the afternoon.

Thus ended the battle of Perryville, in which Sheridan had been engaged more or less actively

through the day, and McCook's corps had struggled against superior numbers and in a hotly contested fight for over four hours. No troops but these and one other brigade of the Third Corps took any active part in the engagement, and not until the action was over was it known to the greater part of the army, then fifty-eight thousand strong, or at the headquarters of the commanding general, that a battle was going on which seriously imperiled the safety of the whole command and resulted in a loss of forty-five hundred killed and wounded.

On the following day the whole army was placed in position for a general engagement, but the Confederate commander, who preferred to select his own time and place for action, and who by his attacks on the 8th had gained the object he desired of checking the pursuit, quietly withdrew his army beyond the Cumberland River and moved into Tennessee unmolested by any pursuit in force.

An interesting personal incident of this campaign is that during its progress General Sheridan met, for the first time since the dispute that caused his suspension at West Point, his old antagonist, who, as a general officer, commanded a brigade in the First Corps. He made overtures for a reconciliation, which were properly accepted, but the renewed friendship lasted but a few days, as General Terrill was among those who fell at Perryville.

After a few days passed in slowly following the enemy on his retreat the army was marched to Bowling Green, Ky., thence to proceed to Nashville. Sheridan reached Bowling Green November 1st, with his force much reduced by the losses at Perryville and by sickness and the fatigues of marching.

He had left Louisville on the 1st of October with twelve regiments of infantry and two batteries, and while his casualties in the battle were not heavy, being in all some three hundred and fifty, his infantry, and especially the eight regiments which had just been raised and were entirely unseasoned to active service, suffered greatly from fatigue, the diseases resulting from insufficient rations, and the heat, dust, and drought that prevailed to a distressing extent throughout these movements, and more than one third had been left in roadside hospitals or were disabled.

General Buell was relieved from command at Bowling Green and succeeded by General Rosecrans, and this army was thereafter officially known as the Army of the Cumberland, which title it retained until the end of the war. The movements of the enemy indicating that his next objective point would be Nashville, the army was ordered to that point and so placed as to protect the city, and for nearly two months no movements of importance were made; in this interval a reorganization of the troops was made, and Sheridan's division was from that time known as the Third Division Right Wing, and placed under the immediate command of General A. McD. McCook, to whom he had furnished assistance at the battle of Perryville, and, as before, contained three brigades, each of four regiments, and a third battery was added to the two originally with the division.

The period of rest from active work that now occurred gave opportunity, which was fully improved, for drilling, disciplining, and training to service in the field the men of the division, the larger part of

whom had been brought to the army directly from their recruiting camps wholly uninstructed.

The method pursued was one of unremitting work, and its value can be estimated from Sheridan's own words, in which he describes the duties he exacted and the labors performed: "Drills, parades, scouts, foraging expeditions, picket and guard duty made up the course in this school of instruction, supplemented by frequent changes in the locations of the different brigades, so that the division could have opportunity to learn to break camp quickly and to move out promptly on the march. Foraging expeditions were particularly beneficial in this respect, and when sent out, though absent sometimes for days, the men went without tents or knapsacks, equipped with only one blanket and their arms, ammunition, and rations, to teach them to shift for themselves with slender means in the event of necessity. The number of regimental and headquarters wagons was cut down to the lowest possible figure, and everything made compact by turning into the supply and ammunition trains all surplus transportation and restricting the personal baggage of officers to the fewest effects possible."

While thus actively employed, General Sheridan also undertook and perfected a systematic method of obtaining information through scouts of the movements, positions, and forces of the enemy, and of the topography of the country in which his troops would be called upon to act; and throughout his future career in the civil war he never ceased to seek by every means in his power information of this nature—an effort in which, by constant endeavor and good judgment in the selection of agents, he rarely failed.



At this time he selected for such duty a loyal man from East Tennessee, James Card, who volunteered his services, and was employed as a scout and guide during the whole period of General Sheridan's service in Tennessee. This man, who had been a colporteur of religious books and occasionally a local preacher, had traveled extensively through the State and was familiar with the country, the roads, and the inhabitants, and his occupation gave him great facilities for traveling unsuspected in any part of the region where he was known.

By this man, aided by two of his brothers, who were engaged for the same work, information was soon obtained of the positions occupied by the different divisions of the Confederate army that were within the State of Tennessee, and of their strength and condition, which were accurate and proved to be of value in the course of future operations.

Until December 26th no movement of importance occurred, and on that day the whole army marched southeastwardly from Nashville in the direction of Murfreesborough, about thirty miles distant, where the enemy was preparing to go into winter quarters. The advance toward this place was made with but slight opposition from the enemy until on the 30th our troops approached Stone River, a stream immediately in front of the town, and the name of which is used in the Confederate reports as designating the battle which here took place. The Confederate troops were found in an intrenched position in advance of this stream, with their front protected by a picket line so strong as to require the deployment of our columns; and Sheridan, who had the advance of General McCook's command and had been



since early morning driving back the skirmishers of the enemy, was ordered to form line of battle and act in concert with the division of General Davis, which would be formed upon his right, in an attack upon a heavy belt of timber in the front, which was occupied by and afforded protection to the enemy's skirmishers. The formation being completed, the two divisions moved forward to the attack, inclining their front to the left as they advanced.

The movement began about half past two in the afternoon and met with a stubborn resistance from the enemy, who opposed it with a considerable force of infantry and a battery of artillery, which was silenced and driven off the field by the guns of Sheridan's division.

By sundown the desired point was gained, and McCook's lines were established in the positions they occupied during the early part of the battle of the following day, and in close proximity to those of the enemy. Sheridan, who held the left of McCook's line, was facing nearly east, the right of his division occupying the timber which had been gained. Davis's division was posted to his right, his troops thrown somewhat to the rear, forming nearly a right angle with those of Sheridan, and the right division, that of Johnson, which formed the extreme right of our army, next to Davis and somewhat advanced to the front.

The other portions of the army, the center, commanded by General Thomas, and the left wing by General Crittenden, were on the left of that of McCook, Thomas being in the center, and the whole army had been thus formed in position for battle, according to the plans of the command-

ing general, successfully and without very serious opposition.

It appears from the report of General Rosecrans that a meeting of the corps commanders was held that night at his headquarters, and his instructions for the action of the next day given, which were that McCook was to occupy the best defensive position he could take, refusing his right as much as practicable, and act on the defensive against any attack if one should be made; and if an attack were not made, then to attack himself with strength sufficient to hold in his front such part of the enemy's force as might be opposed to him. The other corps were to act vigorously on the offensive, and, as they were superior in force to the enemy opposed to them on this part of the line, there was every prospect of success.

It was explained that this combination required for its success that General McCook should be able to hold his position for three hours, and that if necessary to recede he should fall back slowly and steadily, refusing his right, while active and offensive movements were being made by the center and left. General McCook, who knew the ground from previous experience, expressed himself as able to hold his present position for three hours, but General Rosecrans, with excellent judgment, criticised the line he held as facing too much to the east, and advised him to change it if he did not consider it the best that could be obtained, and again reminded him that it was only necessary for him to make things sure. General McCook did not, however, make any change in this disposition of his troops, which General Rosecrans thought and General Bragg

knew to be faulty and greatly exposed, and which was most probably the cause of the great loss and undecided result of the battle.

General Bragg was also during this night forming his plan of battle, and this was precisely the converse of his opponent. His object was, if a victory could be gained, the capture of Nashville, and to effect this our army must be driven to the eastward to leave the way clear for his advance. He therefore also determined to attack vigorously with his left, and use all his strength upon our right, while keeping his own strictly on the defensive, and ordered the movement to begin an hour earlier than that at which General Rosecrans had ordered his advance.

General Sheridan, who knew that on the next morning he would be engaged in a desperate conflict, was engaged through the night in examining his position, placing his troops to the best advantage, and closely observing the movements of the enemy. About two in the morning, from reports he received of the continuous movement of infantry and artillery within the Confederate lines, he was convinced that Bragg was massing on our right, with the purpose of attacking early in the morning. These reports and his own conclusions were to him of so much importance that he went in person to General McCook and gave the information he had received and the impression it had made upon him.

That officer did not seem to regard these matters as of much consequence, and after some discussion concluded that, in view of the defensive part he was to take in the coming engagement, there was no necessity of any change in the dispositions he had made. He appeared confident that Johnson's division could

drawal of his troops with a charge by one of his brigades, which successfully checked and for the time held the advancing enemy, he moved to the right and rear and placed his command at nearly a right angle to the line first held and facing southward, forming it with the center projecting toward the enemy, and his batteries occupying high ground immediately in the rear of the center.

This new position was for some time held, but the Confederate troops continued the extension and advance of their turning movement, and it was evident that our right would be soon again attacked in flank by an overwhelming force. Orders were received from General McCook to again change position, and the division, marching by the left flank under a heavy fire, took up new ground and was reformed, the left brigade communicating with Negley's division of the center, and facing to the south, in front and within range of the enemy's intrenched lines, while the other two brigades in the right were formed facing westward, and opposing the enemy that had successfully driven from the field the two divisions that early in the day formed the extreme right.

This formation was but just completed when the whole front of the division was simultaneously attacked by a force of three of the enemy's divisions and the heaviest contest of the day occurred. The opposing lines were close, little more than two hundred yards intervening, and on both sides great losses were sustained by artillery fire, especially by the enemy, whose advancing masses moved constantly exposed to volleys of shell and canister from our guns; and though at this time General Hardee, who commanded the Confederate attack, had under his

orders two fifths of Bragg's army, he could make no impression upon the divisions of Sheridan and Negley, that now formed the right of our army.

As the enemy fell back from the first assault a message from General Rosecrans was received stating that he was making the new dispositions that were required to meet the unexpected movements of the enemy, and that the position now occupied must under any hazards be maintained until his new lines were formed. From this it appeared that the sacrifice of the whole command might be required to insure the safety of the remainder of the army; but officers and men were determined to do their duty to the utmost, and, having so far successfully resisted every attack, had confidence in their leader and themselves. Though they had lost heavily they knew they had inflicted more serious injury on their foes, and the only cause of doubt in finally maintaining their ground arose from the want of ammunition, which was now beginning to be scarce, and it was necessary to order the troops to use the utmost caution in expending what remained.

A second and third assault followed, which were as vigorously pressed as the first. Both were defeated and driven back, but with terrible loss to our troops. In these Colonel Roberts, who commanded the Third Brigade, was killed, and Colonel Harrington, who succeeded him in command, was a few moments afterward mortally wounded.

After the third assault the enemy appeared satisfied that the position could not be carried, and for a time there was no movement in the lines. Examination showed that, with the exception of a few rounds in one brigade, the ammunition had been entirely



exhausted, and there was little hope of further successful resistance, but fortunately at this juncture the new lines of the army had been established, and Sheridan was permitted to withdraw his division. In this long and desperate struggle he had lost one third of his command in killed and wounded, among whom were to be counted three brigade commanders, and the greater part of his artillery horses had been killed or disabled. The guns of one battery, in which eighty horses had been lost, were left on the field, the ground being so difficult that it was impossible to draw them off by hand, and for the same reasons two guns of another battery were left behind. The remainder, though almost unprovided with horses, were saved by the exertions of the men.

The division, with unbroken formation, retired under a heavy fire, though not actively pursued, and fell back behind that portion of the new line that had been formed to the right and rear. Here a supply of ammunition was procured, and, after some unimportant movements of detachments, Sheridan was ordered to move to the left and relieve the division of General Wood, that was engaged with a heavy force of the enemy. Moving as directed, he found that officer resisting a strong attack along his whole front, and under a heavy artillery fire formed line on his right and attacked vigorously. This re-enforcement seemed to dishearten the enemy, who soon abandoned his attack on Wood's front and retired, after causing some loss to our troops. Among those who fell at this point was Colonel Schaefer, commanding the Second Brigade, who was instantly killed—the fourth brigade commander in the division who lost his life on that day. Falling

back from this position for a short distance to take position in the formation of the new lines, Sheridan received orders from General Rosecrans to prepare to make a charge in the event of a further attack by the enemy, and therefore massed his men in close column, and, ordering them to lie down, remained for more than an hour exposed to a heavy cannonade that caused great loss.

No further engagement occurred during the short remainder of the day, and at night the division withdrew and took up a position on the west side of the Nashville turnpike, some four miles north of Murfreesborough, where it formed the right of the new line established by General Rosecrans.

At nightfall the labors of the day were ended for this division, and its commander for the first time during the engagement had the opportunity of learning the extent of his loss and the service that had been performed. The day had been one of great responsibility, constant anxiety, and unremitting exertion, and while he could not but be satisfied with the conduct of his troops and the success that had attended the operations of his individual command the heavy loss that had thinned his ranks and the unfavorable result of the movements of the army were sufficient causes of sorrow and disappointment. Seldom, if ever, do we find a record of more gallant conduct and unyielding tenacity by any body of troops than was presented by this division during the long hours of this day. In a combat commencing at dawn and lasting until night, it was continuously under fire, and constantly engaged with largely superior forces of the enemy. Early in the day the troops upon the right flank had been driven off the

field, and that flank was frequently attacked and the rear ever in peril. Five vigorous and determined assaults, made by powerful columns of the enemy, had been successfully repulsed, and three times brigades of the division had charged and driven back the advancing foe. Five times had the exigencies of the engagement required a change of position to be made, under the fire of the enemy, and the last hour of daylight was passed in the situation that is of all most trying to soldiers—that of being held in position inactive and exposed to heavy artillery fire. All this toil, danger, and the terrible loss resulting from such exposure had been endured, and through all there had been no rout of any part of the troops or disorganization in the command; and at the end of the day, although with ranks sadly thinned, Sheridan still had under his orders a disciplined and effective force. He was not again called on during these operations for any important work, for while during that night and the following day the enemy made some slight demonstrations of attack, on his part they were so easily repulsed that they require no extended mention.

This campaign closed on January 2, 1863, with an attack made upon the left of our army which met a disastrous defeat, and on the night of January 3d Bragg withdrew his forces and moved southward toward Chattanooga, leaving in our hands this bloody battlefield, and the right to claim a success that would not probably have been ours but for the determined courage and energy with which the exposed right of our army was held during the long time required to reform its lines. The strength of Sheridan's division on the morning of the battle was



4,164, and the casualties numbered 1,633—within a fraction of forty per cent of the force engaged; and in this connection he remarks that, though afterward engaged in very many severe contests, he never in any of his commands experienced so high a rate of casualties.

## CHAPTER IV.

### ARMY OF THE CUMBERLAND.—CHICKAMAUGA.

AFTER the battle of Murfreesborough a long interval of rest was enjoyed by the army of General Rosecrans, which remained encamped in the vicinity of that town until the 24th of June, 1863, though from time to time during this period detachments were sent out on reconnoissances, for forage, or to act against parties of the enemy engaged in similar work. The great loss of men and material sustained in the battle of the 31st of December imperatively required re-enforcements, new supplies, and a reorganization of the troops. Thirty per cent of the effective force of the army had been lost on that day, many guns had been taken by the enemy, and the casualties to horses of the artillery rendered it impossible to move the batteries. The time thus passed in camp was sufficient to remedy all these deficiencies, and when the army again took the field it was more numerous and better supplied and equipped than at any previous period of its history.

At the time and since there has been much discussion and criticism concerning the inactivity of General Rosecrans; and General Halleck, who was then at Washington acting as general in chief of the army, and who since his elevation to that com-

mand had become an earnest advocate for vigorous movements in the field, was constant in urging that active operations should begin; while General Rosecrans—for reasons that were in part strategic, and also based upon questions of supply—was equally satisfied that the proper time for an advance in force had not yet been presented. Fortunately for the reader as well as the writer of these pages, the discussion or settlement of this still vexed question is not here required. To Sheridan this long delay was of value for refitting, recruiting, and disciplining his division.

On the 6th day of January, 1863, he encamped his men south of the town of Murfreesborough, and then resumed and continued for nearly six months the system of instruction of his men that had preceded the last campaign. His gallantry and good service in the battle of Murfreesborough had obtained for him the confidence of General Rosecrans, who in the report of the battle spoke in the highest terms of his conduct, and recommended him for well-deserved promotion; and in April, in less than twelve months from the time when he was acting as captain and quartermaster, Sheridan received his commission as major general of volunteers, with rank from December 31, 1862.

In addition to the strictly military duties of the division, the system of scouting, foraging, and obtaining information of the enemy's position and numbers and of the surrounding country was kept up with results that proved of value when active operations were resumed; but in the course of this work one of the three brothers Card, upon whom as scouts Sheridan placed his chief confidence, was

unfortunately lost, being captured by guerrillas and hung while on a short visit to his father's home. The elder brother, the chief of scouts employed by Sheridan, was so incensed at this act of brutality that he determined at once to leave the service and devote himself to avenging his brother's death, and the general had great difficulty in persuading him to remain. This at last he consented to do, and continued in service and proved of great value until the following winter, when, at Knoxville, he resigned his post as scout and—collecting a party of some thirty men from East Tennessee who had suffered in person or in their families for their loyalty to the Union—started off to the mountains to wage a personal war against those by whom his family and friends had been persecuted.

Frequent attacks by the enemy upon the railroad running north to Nashville and thence to Louisville, which were the depots of supply for the army, and consequent interruption of transportation, produced great scarcity of forage, and for this the troops were compelled to rely upon what might be collected in the country to the south and southwest of Murfreesborough, where, fortunately, corn was abundant. It soon became the custom in the division to send out every week a brigade with a large train of wagons to procure forage in places where the scouts had found it to have been collected; and as these expeditions generally encountered detachments of the enemy, a skirmish of more or less severity was an incident of their excursions, which, in addition to accomplishing their main purpose, gave exercise to the men, accustomed them to the presence of an enemy and the use of their arms, and proved a

needed relief to the depressing monotony that often injures the spirits and health of men who are long confined in a stationary camp and to routine duty.

An amusing incident of one of these expeditions was the discovery on the return march to camp of the presence of two women with a detachment that was sent from the division headquarters as part of the forces. These Amazons, as General Sheridan aptly styles them, had indulged too freely in apple-jack while foraging, and falling into Stone River, were nearly drowned, but, being fished out, in the course of steps taken to restore them to consciousness their true sex was discovered. Inquiry showed that they were refugees who had been driven out of East Tennessee, and who, finding themselves in Louisville entirely without support, had adopted men's clothing and sought Government employ—one as a teamster in the quartermaster's department, and the other enlisting as a trooper in a company of cavalry that did escort duty at Sheridan's headquarters. Both had served for nearly a year without exciting suspicion, and, while known to each other for what they really were, none among their associates had any idea of the truth concerning them. They were as promptly as possible sent out of the lines, and there is no record of their future; but it would be interesting to know in what manner their experience of a soldier's life affected their after-career in the stations to which it had pleased Providence to call them.

Early in March, Sheridan, in command of his division and Minty's brigade of cavalry, was ordered to Franklin to assist in some operations of General Granger against a part of the Confederate army

stationed near that place commanded by Van Dorn. As the country through which his line of march extended was well supplied with forage, he took with him a large train of wagons in which to collect supplies. Finding that a considerable force of Confederate cavalry was posted near the town of Eagleville, he so arranged his column as to give the impression to the enemy that his command was but an ordinary foraging expedition, protected by a small infantry force.

When the attack upon the wagons and their small apparent escort, thus invited, was made, the cavalry brigade was suddenly brought to the front, and by a spirited charge, saber in hand, drove off the enemy, capturing some wagons and mules and about fifty prisoners. As a result of this action the wagon train was loaded up with corn and sent back undisturbed to the camps, and on the next day General Granger was met at Franklin. An advance was then made against Van Dorn, but he declined an engagement and fell back before our troops until they were compelled to abandon the pursuit by the heavy rains which at that season rendered the many streams intersecting the country impassable, and the command returned by way of Franklin to its former camp at Murfreesborough.

From this time on until the latter part of June no operations of any consequence were attempted, and the troops remained inactive, except the occasional skirmishes attending the movement of scouting or foraging parties. The force was largely increased by the return to duty of sick and wounded men and the addition of recruits; discipline had improved, the material lost at Murfreesborough had

been replaced, and supplies, if not abundant, were considered sufficient.

During this period the authorities at Washington were incessantly urging General Rosecrans to advance, and he, in return, was endeavoring to show that such movement at the time would be unwise. In support of his views he urged the fact that the enemy was largely his superior in cavalry, and that he was not sufficiently provided with that arm to undertake an offensive campaign in a hostile region and complained that no attention had been given to his repeated applications for an increase of his mounted force, and for breech-loading arms, which he considered essential to their proper equipment. In addition, he strongly insisted on the fact that the presence of our army in the position it then occupied obliged the Confederates to maintain in its front their largest available force to protect the line of the Tennessee, and their most important railway base at Chattanooga; that Grant was then occupied with the siege of Vicksburg, and that it was of vital importance to the success of that operation to keep the enemy so occupied that re-enforcements could not be sent to that point; and that, if an advance by our army in force should meet with success, Bragg would be forced back to a position whence he could rapidly transport all his troops by rail to Vicksburg and seriously injure if not wholly defeat our efforts at that place.

Preparations were, however, made and supplies collected for an advance; but the question of the advisability of the movement was of so much importance that General Rosecrans issued to his corps commanders and to many of the division generals



in whose judgment he had confidence a confidential circular in which he desired their opinions upon the three following questions:

"1. From the fullest information in your possession, do you think the enemy in front of us has been so materially weakened, by detachments to Johnston or elsewhere, that this army could advance on him at this time with strong reasonable chances of fighting a great and successful battle?"

"2. Do you think an advance of our army at present likely to prevent additional re-enforcements being sent against General Grant by the enemy in our front?"

"3. Do you think an immediate or early advance of our army advisable?"

The officers consulted all disapproved of an immediate advance of our army, some objecting that an attack made upon the Confederate army in a selected and fortified position could only be made with severe loss, and the result would be doubtful. All concurred in the opinion that a success on our part would place it in the power of the retreating enemy to join the forces opposed to General Grant long before re-enforcements could be sent him; and all expressed their judgment against the suggested movement at that time. Among those expressing the two latter opinions is found General Thomas, whom history has shown as one of the bravest and most reliable of our great commanders.

General Sheridan, in his reply, did not allude to detachments that had been previously sent from Bragg's army, but furnished his estimate of the infantry force at that time in our front as being about thirty thousand men, and gave it as his



opinion that if we advanced the enemy would not risk a general engagement, but would fall back to the Tennessee River, and thus be in a position to send re-enforcements against General Grant. He did not approve of an immediate advance; and also alluded to the difficulties that would be met in a direct pursuit of Bragg to the Tennessee River through the country that must be passed over.

His estimate of Bragg's force was afterward found to be correct, and when our army moved, as he predicted, Bragg abandoned his position and moved to Chattanooga, on the south bank of the Tennessee, which fortunately he did not reach until Vicksburg had been taken, and he then kept strictly on the defensive until the arrival of Longstreet's corps from Virginia, about September 17th, and other re-enforcements from Mississippi gave him sufficient force to resume active operations.

It was finally determined, late in June, that the army should advance, and while threatening an attack in force on the center of the Confederate position at Shelbyville, the strongest part of the line, the actual movement should be on the enemy's right, with the object of occupying the town of Tullahoma, where an important depot of supplies had been placed, and where General Bragg, if decided to risk an engagement, would be obliged to fight outside of his fortified lines and on ground selected by his adversary. The command of General McCook, which was now known as the Twentieth Corps, and of which Sheridan's division, as formerly, was the Third, moved out on June 24th, from Murfreesborough, some nine miles, where the enemy's outposts were met, and General Sheridan then marched

to the left to reach the turnpike running from Murfreesborough to Manchester, through Hoover's Gap, a pass occupied by the enemy. Heavy rains, which fell continuously at this time and rendered the country roads almost impassable, impeded the march, and the division did not reach Hoover's Gap until the morning of June 27th, having marched not more than thirty-five miles in that time.

The enemy had abandoned the Gap before the arrival of our troops, who continued moving southward through the day, and at Fairfield met and drove off a small force of the rebels. The next morning Sheridan moved to Manchester, and on the 29th occupied a position within six miles of Tullahoma, where he remained until the other portions of the army, whose march had been much delayed by the heavy rains, could be concentrated. This was done on the night of June 30th, and on July 1st Sheridan advanced on Tullahoma, which had been evacuated, meeting only a strong rear guard of the enemy, with which his advance had the usual skirmishes that attend the pursuit of a retreating foe. The town was soon occupied, but the enemy had succeeded in removing all the supplies that had been there accumulated, and but three siege guns, a few stores, and a small number of prisoners were taken in the place. Early the next morning the pursuit was resumed, but on reaching a stream known as Elk River it was found so swollen by the recent rains as to be impassable, and a detour to the left was made to reach a ford higher up the stream that a scout had reported to be practicable.

A small force of the enemy's cavalry were guarding it and were soon driven off, but the stream was

so high and the current so rapid that footmen unassisted could not cross it. This difficulty was overcome by stretching a strong cable over the stream, by which the men could support themselves against the current, and then the division formed in sets of fours, with their cartridge boxes on their shoulders, holding tightly to one another, and, assisted by the line, crossed rapidly and safely.

Then turning to the right, Sheridan marched down the left bank of the Elk, and on the morning of the 3d reached the village of Winchester with but slight opposition, the small parties of the enemy who were met falling back with slight resistance, and thence moved to Cowan, a station on the line of the Nashville and Chattanooga road, where he went into camp. Here being joined by a mounted force of twelve hundred men, and having learned that Wharton's brigade of Confederate cavalry was posted at a place known as the University, for the purpose of covering the retreat of a body of the enemy's infantry, he advanced to that point on July 5th with the cavalry and a brigade of infantry, but found on arriving there that the enemy had retreated, and a pursuit by the cavalry ascertained that the whole force had crossed the Tennessee River at Bridgeport, burning the bridge at that place.

This and other reconnoissances showed that the enemy had abandoned Middle Tennessee, and that his whole army was now south of the Tennessee River and concentrated about Chattanooga in a very strong and advantageous position, protected on his front by the River and the Cumberland Mountains, close to his bases of supply and connected by several interior lines of railway with the other Confederate

armies, from which he could be rapidly re-enforced. These new conditions required the beginning on our part of a new campaign, of which Chattanooga should be the objective point, and under greater difficulties than had previously existed.

The country where our army was now placed was almost destitute of supplies, having been foraged over by both armies for the past twelve months, and until the ripening of new crops could furnish nothing. Nashville, the nearest depot, was distant more than eighty miles, and it was impossible to haul supplies by wagons sufficient for the army from that point and the railroad, upon which dependence must be placed, had been badly broken up by the Confederates in their retreat. The first work in hand was to restore this to usefulness and accumulate supplies for a further advance; and the usual discussion between the authorities in Washington—elated by the victories of Gettysburg and Vicksburg—and General Rosecrans as to the necessity of immediate movement was resumed with more than former bitterness. For two months, however, none but preparatory marches were made, in the course of which Sheridan was ordered early in July to occupy Stevenson, an important railway junction within five miles of the river and forty miles east of Chattanooga, where he remained until July 29th, when with two brigades he occupied Bridgeport, where the Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad crosses the Tennessee, and which had been selected as one of the points for crossing the river.

On the 16th of August General Rosecrans began a series of movements by which the enemy was entirely deceived concerning his actual plans for cross-

ing the river and attacking, and was led to believe that an advance would be in front of and to the west of Chattanooga. These demonstrations and the opening of a heavy artillery fire upon the town from the north bank of the river caused Bragg to concentrate his troops to the south of Chattanooga and abandon the positions he had held along the river bank, and our army passed the Tennessee at four points entirely unopposed. Sheridan was informed on the 30th of August that, as the supply of pontoons with the army was insufficient, he would be required to build a bridge at Bridgeport, where he had been posted, and a battalion of engineer troops were given him for that purpose. He sent fifteen hundred of his men with axes and teams into the woods which skirted the river, and by night had procured all the heavy timber needed for a trestle bridge. Some flooring had been supplied, but not in sufficient quantity, and the remainder was obtained by using the planks and weather-boarding of the neighboring houses and barns. In two days the bridge was completed, and on the 2d and 3d of September the division passed over the river, being the advance of McCook's corps, which was on the right of the army

From the 4th to the 10th of September these troops were engaged in a difficult and toilsome march to the southward, crossing three ranges of mountains, and on that day Sheridan reached the town of Alpine and was on the extreme right of the army, which at that time held a line of more than forty miles, the left being at or near Chattanooga. These dispositions were made upon the assumption that the Confederates were in full retreat, with no



intention of engaging our army, and the extension of our right was intended to threaten his communications with the forces known to be in Mississippi. General Bragg had, however, already been re-enforced by fifteen thousand men from that quarter, and, knowing that Longstreet's corps was moving toward him from the east as rapidly as the railway could transport it, was preparing for action and selecting the position in which he could act to the best advantage, which proved to be a line in front and to the west of Chickamauga Creek.

General Sheridan became uneasy at the extended condition of our army and the insecurity of his own position, and on the evening of September 10th sent one of his scouts into the enemy's lines, who, after a perilous trip, during which he had once been captured but succeeded in escaping, returned with intelligence that the Confederates were preparing for an engagement, and were expecting the arrival of Longstreet's corps within a few days.

This information made an immediate concentration of our troops necessary, and a general movement to the left was at once begun. Sheridan, after a march lasting from the 13th to the 16th, in the course of which he was obliged to cross the Lookout Mountain range by passes where it was often necessary to drag up and lower the artillery and wagons by hand, succeeded in reaching the main body of the army. On the next two days, following the movements of the other troops, he marched still farther to the left, and on the 19th for some hours continued that movement and went into line of battle at Crawfish Springs to protect the right and rear. The movement of the army to the left still continuing, he

again advanced and took possession of the ford of Chickamauga Creek, at Lee and Gordon's Mills, and re-established his communications, being actively engaged while doing so by the skirmishers of the enemy's cavalry, and obliged to drive from the ford a force of Confederates which had occupied it in the absence of our troops.

Hardly had the ford been secured when he was ordered again to the left, to assist General Crittenden, who was heavily engaged and leaving one of his brigades at the ford, with the other two he moved as directed for about a mile and a half, and, reaching the left of Crittenden's troops, found one division already driven back with the loss of one of its batteries. Hastily forming the First Brigade as it reached the field, it was at once thrown forward, and by a successful charge drove back the enemy and recovered the captured guns. The Second Brigade on its arrival was also formed and put in action, and at the close of a short but severe contest the lost ground was recovered and the position held by the defeated division regained, though with a heavy loss, in which was included Colonel Bradley, the officer commanding Sheridan's Third Brigade. The brigade that had been left at the ford soon arriving, Sheridan, with his usual energy, suggested to Crittenden that a counter-attack be made upon the enemy; but as that officer found that his troops, which had been engaged all day, were not in condition for such a movement, this idea could not be acted on.

The whole of the army had been engaged during the day in a series of disconnected actions, in which first one side and then the other had met with partial successes or reverses; but, while heavy losses had

been sustained by our troops, the enemy had also suffered severely, and had made no impression on our lines.

The force displayed on the Confederate side confirmed the reports of his having been re-enforced to an extent that gave him a superiority in numbers, and his movements indicated his intention of renewing an offensive battle on the next day, in which his principal effort would be made to crush the left of our army and drive it westward from Chattanooga.

At nightfall Sheridan, who continued on the extreme right of the army, moved again to the left and rear, and after the troops were posted rode over to army headquarters to learn the events of the day and the movements intended for that succeeding. He met there many of the higher officers of the army and was unpleasantly affected by the general depression and lack of confidence that was evident among them. Though all the attacks of the enemy had been successfully resisted, the opinion prevailed that defeat was to be expected; and when the commanders of an army are looking for disaster it is scarcely possible that any success can be hoped for.

On the morning of the 20th a heavy fog covered the positions of the troops, and the lines were quiet until about nine o'clock, when the attack on our left, commanded by General Thomas, was resumed with energy. Sheridan was meantime moved still farther to the left, and about eleven o'clock discovered that the movements of the troops on his left had caused a wide interval between himself and the main army. This was closed by one of his brigades and two of the brigades of General Davis, and, the enemy beginning an attack on this force, Sheridan rode back to bring up



his other two brigades. These he found in motion, they having been ordered by the corps commander to march as rapidly as possible to the extreme left of the army to the support of General Thomas's troops, which were heavily pressed. As this movement was begun a fierce attack by the enemy drove back the two brigades of General Davis, and then that of Sheridan, which had charged in their support. Fortunately, the troops ordered to the left were at this moment passing in rear, and, facing to the right, were formed in line of battle under a heavy fire. Scarcely had the line been formed when the victorious Confederates, pressing forward in much superior force, attacked and drove our men to the rear with fearful loss. They were rallied and reformed and by a bold charge drove back the enemy, capturing the colors of one of his regiments, but the ground regained could not be held, and again they fell back, losing heavily, General Lytle, commanding the First Brigade, being among the killed. This retreat continued until a range of low hills half a mile to the rear of the last position was reached, where line was reformed and the advancing enemy checked. By this time, about one in the afternoon, Generals Rosecrans and McCook had left the field and were on their way to Chattanooga, leaving no orders or instructions, and General Sheridan with his badly shattered division was left unsupported to do as best he could for himself. The enemy had now ceased to attack on his front, but was moving around to the left of the division, cutting it off from the remainder of the army and endeavoring to occupy the line of retreat.

Sheridan therefore fell back to the south face of Missionary Ridge, where he found and was joined by

a brigade of Davis's division that had become separated from its proper command, and, finding the enemy still between him and the force of General Thomas, he moved still farther back to Rossville, whence he hoped to open communications. He reached Rossville about five o'clock, bringing with him eight pieces of artillery, forty-six caissons, and a large train of ammunition wagons that had been found on the march abandoned and in confusion.

Passing through Rossville and turning to the right, Sheridan cut through the extreme right of the enemy's line, capturing several of his field hospitals, and reached the left of General Thomas's command at six o'clock. Here, reporting to General Thomas, Sheridan asked for orders. He was informed that while the attacks of the enemy throughout the day had been repulsed, the troops had suffered so heavily and the lines were so disorganized that no offensive movement could be undertaken on our part, and instructed to return to Rossville and, making that point secure, assist in covering the withdrawal of the remainder of the army to that place. General Thomas, the general in chief being at Chattanooga, eight miles from the field, had been since early in the day in command of all the troops engaged on the left, and had steadily, though with great loss, maintained his position and saved our army from an overwhelming defeat. Generals Thomas and Sheridan returned together to Rossville, and the latter soon placed his division in a position that would cover the arrival and disposition of the other troops as they were withdrawn from the field.

General Sheridan describes the night that followed as one of the most cheerless and depressing

periods of his military service. Resting on the ground, with his saddle for a pillow, he was indebted to the kindness of a soldier for a cup of coffee and a piece of hard bread—his only meal in twenty-four hours. As he reviewed the events of the day and the prospect of the future, he has confessed that he was for once discouraged and had little hope for any improvement in the condition of affairs; the situation must have been grave indeed to have thus affected a soldier in whom character, enterprise, courage, and persistent effort against adverse circumstances were leading features.

He had been obliged to engage his men under the most adverse circumstances, disconnected from and unsupported by other troops, without opportunity to select positions or make proper formations, at a most critical period abandoned in the field by his corps commander, and at one time opposing four divisions of the enemy. In the battle, out of five thousand effective men he had lost fifteen hundred and seventeen officers and men, including the commanders of two of his brigades. The condition of the army, which had lost very heavily and was much broken up, the retreat that was being made in the presence of a successful enemy, and the conduct of officers holding the highest responsible positions, who evidently despaired of success, all presaged further and more serious disaster should the enemy continue to act with the spirit and boldness he had exhibited.

Fortunately, however, the losses of the Confederates during these two days of battle, which were greater than our army had sustained, had rendered movement on their part impossible, and no further

attack was made upon our lines. During the day that followed the battle the army in and about Rossville was reorganized, stragglers and detached bodies of troops were collected and returned to their proper commands, and, as supplies and ammunition were plentiful, hope began to revive, and it was found that the disaster suffered was neither crushing nor conclusive. On the night of the 21st the army, with Sheridan's division as a rear guard, fell back from Rossville, and on the 22d was established within a heavy line of intrenchments about the town of Chattanooga. No attempt was made by the enemy to prevent or impede these movements, as he was in no condition to resume the offensive; and had our troops been held at Rossville, there is little doubt but that Bragg would have been compelled to retire from our front and allow us, as at Murfreesborough, through the occupation of the field of battle, to claim the honors of the day.

## CHAPTER V.

### CHATTANOOGA.—RELIEF OF KNOXVILLE.

TWELVE months had now passed since Sheridan had been placed at the head of the division of infantry which he still commanded. In that time he had so disciplined and instructed this command of raw troops and the thousands of recruits that were from time to time added to his division to supply the losses caused by battle and disease that he had always under his control the steadiest and most reliable division attached to the army in which he served. The year had been to him and to his men a period of steady labor and of unvaried success in the minor operations in which they had acted independently, and of development in efficiency and reputation. He had passed through three great battles—those of Perryville, Murfreesborough, and Chickamauga—in each of which he had been engaged from dawn until night, generally unsupported by other troops, and obliged to act on his own responsibility. In two of these engagements—Murfreesborough and Chickamauga—it had been his fortune with his single division to protect and hold the right flank of our army on occasions when his failure to perform that duty would have caused very serious if not fatal disaster to our troops.

In all he was engaged with forces of the enemy greatly outnumbering his own, and while the conditions under which he performed his part in these battles were such that he was unable to inflict a crushing defeat upon his enemy or obtain a brilliant and decisive victory, the determined courage with which he fought and the cool and clear judgment he displayed in the movement and disposition of his troops in the constantly changing incidents of long and stubborn conflicts were invaluable to the cause he served. The losses sustained in these three engagements were appalling, and alone would show the severity and obstinacy of the contests in which he was employed.

In each of these battles the division went into action with an average strength of four thousand men, and when the sun went down at the close of the day of our misfortune at Chickamauga General Sheridan had lost from his single division in the engagements named in killed, wounded, and missing, 3,483 men, and in this loss were to be counted six commanders of brigades—five killed and one badly wounded. Three hundred and fifty of these fell at Perryville, and in the other two battles the remainder was lost in almost equal number in each engagement. With all this the troops and their leader had never lost heart nor lacked the power to defend themselves or attack the enemy. They had never been routed, panic-stricken, nor driven in confusion; but if retreat was necessary or advance to be made, each movement was performed under orders and with a purpose, and at the close of the severest engagement they were always found organized, formed, and ready for any further service that might be required.

This twelvemonth was an eventful epoch in the life of General Sheridan, and he gained in it an experience of the greatest value. He had become accustomed, according to an old Scotch saying, "to fight for his own hand," and had learned that it was possible to succeed at times, and that it was always in the power of an officer having command of reliable troops to seriously injure an enemy, preserve and keep in hand his own men, and render valuable service even when opposed to an adversary superior in numbers. It was his good fortune that with Chickamauga his experience of desperate and indecisive battles closed, and from that time on he was to take part or be the leader in operations that were designed for and obtained victory.

On the morning of September 22d the army of General Rosecrans had been withdrawn from the field and was established in fortified lines in and around the town of Chattanooga. The enemy soon followed, and, establishing a line of earthworks parallel to those of our army and occupying Lookout Mountain and valley on our right and Missionary Ridge on our front and left, held the Army of the Cumberland virtually in a state of siege; and as it was cut off from the terminus of the railroad to Nashville and compelled to procure supplies by means of wagons over a difficult road sixty miles in length, the troops soon began to suffer for want of rations, and great numbers of animals were lost for want of forage. General Sheridan relates that he was able to provide his division with more abundant food and forage than was received by other commands, as he sent out a company of cavalry, guided by his scout Card, into the enemy's country, and



these men, acting with great caution and keeping themselves carefully hidden, were successful in obtaining a quantity of food and forage which, added to the scanty supplies received from the regular sources, kept his men and animals in fair condition.

For two months the army remained in this position, doing little but such work as was connected with the protection of supply trains and the construction of additional defensive works. The enemy were equally inactive, limiting their operations to attacks by cavalry upon our wagon trains and an irregular and generally harmless artillery fire upon our lines. This interval of quiet was again used, as had been others succeeding important engagements of the Army of the Cumberland, to reorganize the troops and effect changes of commanders.

Generals McCook and Crittenden, commanding respectively the Twentieth and Twenty-first Corps, were relieved of command and ordered away, and their corps were consolidated into a new organization, which was designated as the Fourth Corps and placed under the orders of General Gordon Granger. General Sheridan commanded the Second Division of this corps, retaining his old troops and thirteen regiments from other commands were added to his force; but all had been so cut up in the recent battle that, though now having nominally twenty-five regiments, his effective strength was not much greater than it was previous to Chickamauga.

On the 19th of October General Rosecrans was relieved from command of the Army of the Cumberland and replaced by General Thomas, whose courage and ability, so well displayed at Chickamauga and previous fields, had won for him the



confidence and regard of the troops. Before this change of commanders was made, the Eleventh and Twelfth Corps of the Army of the Potomac, under General Hooker, had arrived in Tennessee, and, reporting to General Rosecrans, this force was ordered to protect the Nashville Railroad and the roads by which supplies were procured; and this work being effectively performed, the wants of the army were more fully supplied.

General Grant, who had been assigned to the command of all troops operating in Tennessee, arrived at Chattanooga on the 23d of October, and, the lines of supply having been completely re-established, the army was actively employed in refitting and preparing for active operations, which were to be resumed as soon as General Sherman, who was marching from West Tennessee with the Fifteenth Corps, should reach Chattanooga. While these active efforts for attacking the enemy with an increased force were being made, General Bragg weakened his army by sending Longstreet's corps—containing his most reliable troops—to Knoxville, to aid in the siege of that place.

By November 18th Sherman had arrived, our preparations were complete, and General Grant gave his orders for the intended movement. Sherman, who was in command of the left flank of the army, posted on the north bank of the Tennessee River, was directed to cross by a pontoon bridge, attack the enemy's right on the northern extremity of Missionary Ridge, and drive the opposing force southward. The Army of the Cumberland, the center, was to hold its lines in front of the ridge, and was intended to be kept in reserve to co-operate with

the attack of General Sherman, while General Hooker, on the right, should hold Lookout Valley and act against the enemy in such manner as circumstances connected with movements of the other forces should indicate. According to this plan as it was originally proposed, the main attack and the task of dislodging the enemy from his strong position on Missionary Ridge was in charge of General Sherman, whose force consisted of five divisions, and who was directed against the most assailable part of the enemy's lines, while the commands of Generals Thomas and Hooker were to hold the intrenched lines and either act in support of General Sherman or so occupy the attention of the Confederates as to prevent the concentration of too large a force against the assaulting column. Indeed, but little service was expected from the Army of the Cumberland, for General Sherman, in his Memoirs, relates that in the consultation that preceded the movement General Grant remarked "that the men of Thomas's army had been so demoralized by the battle of Chickamauga that he feared they could not be got out of their trenches to assume the offensive," and that "the Army of the Cumberland had so long been in the trenches that he wanted my troops to take the offensive *first*, after which he had no doubt the Cumberland Army would fight well."

The route by which Sherman moved to his selected position was difficult, and delay was caused by the time needed to construct the bridge, so that his column did not succeed in crossing the river and reaching the position from which to attack until the morning of November 23d, by which time the

enemy was fully informed of our movement. Sherman moved forward, driving the enemy's skirmishers, and in the afternoon repulsed a heavy attack on his lines, but did not make much progress. To relieve him as much as possible, Thomas was ordered to make a demonstration against the forces in his front, and sent forward two divisions—Sheridan's and Wood's—which drove back the pickets of the enemy and advanced our lines as far as Orchard Knobb and close to the foot of Missionary Ridge, where the enemy held a strongly fortified line. These troops immediately intrenched the new line they had gained and remained there, exposed to artillery fire, but otherwise unmolested. On the 24th occurred General Hooker's battle among the clouds, when, being ordered to make a demonstration on our right, with ten thousand men he stormed and took Lookout Mountain, driving off two divisions of the enemy by which it was held. During the early part of the 25th General Sherman, with the troops engaged in the main attack, was endeavoring to advance and met with so strong an opposition that he could make little progress, and about two o'clock General Thomas was ordered to move forward four of his divisions, of which Sheridan's was one, and capture the line of rifle pits held by the enemy at the foot of Missionary Ridge, and, these taken, to halt and await further orders. This required an advance over open ground for some five hundred yards, until the foot of the ridge was reached, from which there was a steep ascent to the summit of five hundred yards. At the foot of the ridge was the enemy's first line of rifle pits, a second line about half way up the face, and at the summit

a third line, in which the Confederates had massed their artillery.

Our preparations for this attack were made in full view of the enemy, who, from his elevated position, could observe every movement in our lines, and he could be seen bringing up additional troops from the left and preparing for a vigorous defense. It was evident to Sheridan's quick perception that the position our troops would hold if they should cease advancing after capturing the first line of rifle pits would be untenable under the fire that could be brought to bear from the crest of the ridge, and that safety as well as success depended upon continuing the attack and carrying the works at the summit and sending back an aid to communicate this opinion to the corps commander. When the signal for assault was given he advanced, determined to continue the attack, and if possible, to gain the summit.

The advance on the first line of rifle pits was gallantly made by our troops, who, without firing a shot, charged over the open ground under a heavy fire of musketry and artillery, and, sweeping over the line of works at the foot of the ridge, completely routed the defending force, killing and capturing them in large numbers. The works were taken and the men were ordered to lie down, as well to obtain a brief rest as for protection from the heavy fire that was plunging upon them from the works above.

After a short pause the advance up the ridge began, and, as the troops moved forward, the aid who had been sent to the corps commander returned with the information that the movement was limited to carrying the first line of rifle pits, but the men were now gallantly climbing the hill with a

courage and spirit that promised complete success. On the steep and broken ground regular lines could not be maintained, but each regiment, with its colors in advance, pressed onward and upward, now one leading, and then another, until the second line of works was carried.

Pausing but a moment to collect the men, the troops again charged forward under a very heavy fire, but the steepness of the ascent was such that the artillery could not be sufficiently depressed; the casualties were fewer than might have been expected, and without a check the men reached the summit and leaped over the works, which the greater part of the enemy's force had abandoned. A short distance in the rear the headquarters of General Bragg had been established, and at this point a small Confederate force with a battery opened fire upon our troops, but they were soon overpowered and driven off, with the loss of their guns. Generals Bragg and Breckinridge, with some other distinguished Confederate leaders, barely escaped capture at this point. By this time troops from the other divisions that had taken part in the first attack and who had felt the impulse that urged Sheridan to win a victory without, and even against, orders, had reached difficult points of the summit, and by night the Confederate army was in full retreat.

The victory was complete. The Confederate army was driven in confusion from the field, losing heavily in killed, wounded, and prisoners, and abandoning many of its guns. Seldom, if ever, has a battle been won by operations that were not only so inconsistent with, but opposed to the plans of the commanding general.



The main attack, that had been actively pressed for two days on the right of the Confederate army, had accomplished nothing, and the diversion in its support made by troops of whom doubts had been expressed whether they could be got out of their trenches for an offensive movement resulted in the capture of the enemy's strongest position, drove back the center of his line of battle, and compelled a hasty and confused retreat of his whole army.

To no one was this result of the action of our troops more surprising than to General Grant, who, as he observed that the demonstration was converted into a serious attack and the men were ascending the ridge, inquired of General Thomas "by whose orders those troops were going up the hill?" and on being answered that the movement had not been ordered, remarked that "it was all right if it turned out all right: if not, some one would suffer." Fortunately for the actors in this stirring scene, the success they obtained was sufficient to excuse the imprudent zeal that incited them to exceed the orders that had been given, and the Confederate army was the only sufferer by the taking of Missionary Ridge.

After the crest of the ridge was taken, and General Sheridan's division had been reformed, he, without orders, pushed forward in pursuit of the retreating columns of the enemy. He had studied the topography of the country and followed a road that led to Chickamauga station, the main depot of supplies for the Confederate army. His two advanced brigades soon overtook the rear guard, and after a slight skirmish routed it, capturing nine more guns and a large wagon train. The division continued to advance, and at a distance of a mile and a half from

Missionary Ridge the enemy was again overtaken, but this time in stronger force, posted on a second ridge with eight guns in position, and resolved, if possible, to check our pursuit. The first attack made on this position was repulsed, but two flanking parties were ordered on the right and left of the Confederate lines, and, these acting with the main line, a second assault was given, which drove the enemy, who abandoned his lines, leaving two more guns and a number of wagons in our possession.

After taking this ridge, Sheridan found himself two miles in advance of the line on Missionary Ridge, and learned that his division was the only body of troops engaged in pursuing the enemy. The line of march he was following would bring him to Chickamauga station, where it would be possible to cut off the retreat of the Confederate troops that had been resisting General Sherman's advance during the day, but his own force was not sufficient for so important an object, and he rode back to Missionary Ridge to procure re-enforcement.

He explained the situation to the commander of his corps, whom he found in occupation of Bragg's deserted headquarters, and earnestly urged that the other divisions should be pressed forward; but that officer declined to make any further movement, and expressed himself as fully satisfied with what had been already accomplished. Permission was at last obtained that General Sheridan might advance with his division to the crossing of Chickamauga Creek, and if the enemy should be met, troops would be ordered to his support.

Dissatisfied with this very slight concession to his plans, but still hopeful, he rode back to his



troops, whom he reached about midnight, and again moved forward, and at two o'clock reached the crossing of the creek, about half a mile below the station, which was his objective point. The enemy in retreating had destroyed the bridge, but the stream could be forded. The enemy was not met in any force, but a single division was too weak to take and hold a position where it would be compelled to engage the large force that held Sherman's troops at bay for two days. In the hope of bringing up support, and as a last appeal to troops inactive in the rear, two regiments were directed to open a heavy fire, which was maintained for some time, but though heard at headquarters, these sounds of apparent conflict were not sufficient to obtain the needed assistance, and the opportunity of largely increasing our success was lost.

This failure to reap the fruits of our victory to the utmost was a disappointment to General Sheridan, notwithstanding all the success he had obtained, and it was equally so to his superiors when on the following day it was learned that his plans were correctly laid and that if he had been supported as he desired the troops confronting Sherman would have been captured or destroyed, as they did not pass through Chickamauga station in their retreat until after daylight on the morning of the 26th.

In this engagement, for the first time since his connection with the Army of the Cumberland, Sheridan enjoyed the opportunity of acting vigorously and prominently in an offensive movement against a strongly intrenched enemy, and he improved this to the fullest extent, as appears from the history of that battle. As in previous engagements, his troops

took the leading part in the contest, and suffered more than any other division engaged, but the success obtained was well worth the cost.

His division, larger than ever before, contained 6,000 men as it went into action; and of these, 123 officers and 1,181 men were killed or wounded. The injury that was inflicted on the enemy was sufficient, however, to compensate for the losses sustained, and 17 guns and 1,762 prisoners were taken on the field by Sheridan's command. It was the first to reach the crest of Missionary Ridge, and there captured the headquarters of the enemy, and was the only force that ventured in pursuit of the retreating foe.

There is one penalty that soldiers who are enterprising and courageous must pay in return for such success as they have gained, and that is found in the calls that are always made upon them for service that is especially arduous and requires the greatest effort. General Burnside, who had been for some time at Knoxville, had reported his troops in a state of siege, as unprovided with subsistence, and in a most perilous position, and the first duty undertaken by General Grant after Bragg's defeat was to send relief to that threatened city.

The Fourth Corps, under General Granger, and the Army of the Tennessee, under General Sherman, were ordered for this duty on the day succeeding the battle, and Sheridan, falling back from his advanced position, returned to Chattanooga, and on the 29th of November started on the march to Knoxville. The troops were in no condition to march or to endure a campaign in the winter season that had now set in. On leaving Murfreesborough in June, as the weather was warm and celerity in movement im-

portant, knapsacks, heavy clothing, overcoats, and tents had been left behind; no opportunity had offered to send these necessities to the army, and as the whole transportation of the army had been taxed to its greatest powers to furnish rations and forage in quantities barely sufficient to support the men, no additional supplies of clothing had been obtained, and the men had no clothing other than that with which they had begun a summer campaign, in light marching order, and which had suffered from five months' wear and exposure to the weather and the damage caused by severe service. A few overcoats and rubber blankets were procured at Chattanooga, but in number quite insufficient to supply the wants of the command, and it was impossible to obtain shoes, which were greatly needed. Thus poorly equipped, the troops marched out to undertake a journey of one hundred miles, with the prospect at its close of being actively engaged with the force that under Longstreet was in front of Knoxville, and having no supplies beyond four days' rations carried by the men and a small quantity of food carried on a steamer that accompanied the troops on the Tennessee River, along which their line of march extended. Near Knoxville Granger's corps was united with the troops under Sherman that had hitherto marched by a different road, and on the 5th of December the whole relieving force reached Marysville, some fifteen miles southwest of Knoxville. It was here learned that Longstreet had a few days before been signally defeated in an assault upon the works defending the city, and had raised the siege and retreated eastwardly toward the Virginia line.

General Sherman, in his Memoirs, mentions the visit he made to Knoxville on this occasion and his surprise at finding the besieged troops for whose relief he had been dispatched far better equipped and supplied than those who had come to their assistance. He was especially surprised at the excellent dinner to which he was invited—to use his own words, “embracing roast turkey”—and which was supplied with such luxuries as tablecloth, dishes, and other appliances to which he and his men had long been strangers. Upon his remarking that he had been hastily dispatched to Knoxville under the impression that had prevailed that the troops there were starving, it was explained that at no time had the enemy completely invested the place, and that communication with the country to the south had at all times been open, from which a good supply of beef, corn, and bacon had been obtained. In fact, the relieving army was suffering more from want and hardship than the one it had marched so hurriedly to assist, and which had, unaided, been able, when put to the proof, to defeat and drive off the enemy. General Sherman, who was in command of the troops from Chattanooga, concluded to leave at Knoxville General Granger, with two divisions, to co-operate with Burnside in an effort to drive Longstreet out of Tennessee, and with his own force marched back to Chattanooga.

From this time nothing of moment occurred that is worthy of record in detail in connection with the troops in and about Knoxville. During the months of December and January the troops were moved about the country, engaged in useless marches and futile expeditions that neither promised nor produced



results, badly supplied, suffering from want of food and clothing, and exposed without shelter of any kind to severe cold and violent storms. The enemy was never met in force, and the few skirmishes that occurred were of no importance or value to either side. At length, after two toilsome and trying months of such adventure, General Sheridan with his troops was ordered to encamp at Loudon, thirty miles south of Knoxville, where he would be in communication by railroad with Chattanooga, and could rest and supply his men. This place was reached on January 27, 1864, and tents and clothing, with abundant rations, were procured, the division was again equipped, and the hardships and trials of the previous year forgotten.

When his troops had been settled with comfort in their camps, and due arrangement made for supplying their wants, General Sheridan, who had suffered much in health and strength from the severe labors he had performed, availed himself of this period of quiet to take a short leave of absence, the first he had enjoyed since his entry into service in 1853. This was passed at the North, and mostly at his home in Ohio, and the rest and relief from care soon restored him to his usual vigorous health. In March he returned to Loudon and took command of his troops, expecting soon to take part in the spring campaign of the Western army.

The plans he had formed were, however, soon disturbed, and on the 23d of March he received from Chattanooga a telegram in which he was directed by General Grant to proceed at once to Washington and report to the adjutant general of the army. He was not informed of the intention

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with which this order was given, or what change in his duties or station would result from it, but assumed that it would separate him from the troops he had commanded so long, whom he had led through many dangers and perils, who had bravely and faithfully followed him wherever duty called, and to whose conduct and gallantry he felt himself indebted for the success that had attended his career. He took no formal leave of his command, fearing that he could not control the feelings of deep regret that such a parting would occasion; but as it was learned that he was leaving, the whole division, officers and men, without orders, collected near the station to have one last glance at the chief they were about to lose, and whom in the fortunes of war many would see for the last time; and with abundant evidence of good will and affection he thus severed his relations with "Sheridan's division." They were peculiarly his own men, as the greater part had come to him as untrained recruits, and none had more than slight experience of the duties of a soldier when, in September, 1862, the division was organized, and from that time to the day of his departure he had been constantly with them—in camp, on the march, and in the most fiercely contested battles of the war.

The men had known and appreciated the constant care, forethought, and diligence their general had exercised in supplying their needs, insuring them all possible comforts that could be obtained, and sparing them from needless fatigue and peril. They had witnessed and honored his gallantry in action, and knew that under his command they could expect success as the result of their efforts,

and that it would be gained at the least possible cost of life or suffering. On his part, the feeling of regard toward the troops was equally warm. Their duty had always been faithfully performed and his every order had been promptly and cheerfully obeyed. Though in battle they sustained the heaviest losses, and were again and again engaged with overpowering numbers of the enemy, they had always been steady and retained their discipline, had never been routed or driven from the field, and equally in misfortune or victory had been distinguished for courage, steadiness, and fidelity; and he felt that much of his personal success and rapid advance in rank and fame was due to the conduct and services of these gallant men from whom he was now to part.



## CHAPTER VI.

ARMY OF THE POTOMAC.—WILDERNESS.—RICHMOND.  
—COLD HARBOR.

AT Chattanooga, General Sheridan, much to his surprise, learned that he was ordered to Washington with the intention that he should take command of the cavalry corps of the Army of the Potomac. This new duty, though it gave a larger command, was not altogether welcome, as, in addition to the heavier responsibilities involved, he was called to serve in a part of the country of which he had no knowledge, with officers to whom he was entirely a stranger, and in a different arm of the service from that in which his experience as a general officer had been acquired, and, personally, he would have much preferred to have continued in his late position. The situation, however, existed, and must be accepted; he therefore proceeded to Washington and, in the absence of General Grant, reported at the headquarters of General Halleck, under whom he had served at the West and by whom he was presented to the Secretary of War, Mr. Stanton, and subsequently to the President, both of whom he saw on this occasion for the first time, and after some formal conversation as to his past service and the new duties he was to assume, he left Washington

and proceeded to join his new command, the headquarters of which were at Brandy Station, Va., sixty-two miles southwest from Washington, and on arriving, on April 5, 1864, he at once assumed command.

The command that General Sheridan was now called to exercise was, as his predecessors had found, trying, and presented many features that were embarrassing to the officer to whom it was confided. The organization of the cavalry as a corps was comparatively recent, and that had been accomplished with much difficulty and under discouraging circumstances, and at no time had the officers in command possessed exclusive authority over these troops or had any power of independent action. At the beginning of the war Lieutenant-General Scott, then in command of our armies, had no belief in the utility of mounted troops, and to the extent of his power opposed the enlistment or organization of cavalry regiments, and those that were first called into service were raised under the direct authority of the President and contrary to the advice and wishes of the officers who held high commands.

The officers of the old army who had been in the mounted service had no experience in the handling or control of any large body of cavalry, as for many years past a squadron had been the largest unit with which they were familiar; no attention from any competent authority was given to the drill, discipline, or organization of these troops, and they were dependent for their vital necessities upon such efforts as could be made by their regimental officers. During the first year of the war no attempt at even brigade organization was made, but the rule of service adopted was to assign one or more regiments of

cavalry to each division of infantry, and leave them to such duties as each division commander might impose. As a consequence of such a disposition heavy work and much hardship were sustained and effects produced injurious to the discipline, morale, and value of the troops. There being no officer of rank or authority charged with the duty of providing supplies or equipments, these were always deficient, and in any distributions the other arms of the service were preferred. The regiments were broken up in small detachments to furnish orderlies and escorts for general officers, guards for division wagon trains, and pickets to protect the fronts of infantry lines, and were rarely united for drill or for any service as an organized body. In the summer of 1862 the necessities of severe service compelled the organization of some brigades of cavalry, and as such, attached to different corps of the army, they were able to do some effective work in the field and provided for the safety of the infantry when that was at rest, but still suffered from the want of a compact organization and of a responsible chief.

It was not the least of the services that General Hooker rendered when, early in 1863, he authorized the formation of a cavalry corps, in the Army of the Potomac, and the various regiments and brigades scattered through the army were at last united in divisions and placed in a separate command. A great improvement in these troops was at once made, and from that time till the close of the war the cavalry constantly developed in effective strength and value of the service it rendered. Its strength was not available at the battle of Chancellorsville, as during that engagement the whole corps, with the ex-

ception of one brigade, was scattered in a series of desultory raids and operations in the rear of the enemy, which, while in some instances executed with dash and brilliancy, produced no result of importance. A change in the commander of the corps followed, and General Pleasonton—who, at a critical period of the battle of Chancellorsville, with a brigade of cavalry and a few field pieces, gallantly repulsed an attack of the enemy's infantry that, if successful, would have routed our army—was selected for the position. His services to the corps were of great value, and he perfected the organization that had been commenced; and to his influence were due changes among the higher officers that added greatly to its efficiency. He believed strongly in the capacity of young and enterprising men as leaders of cavalry, and was of the opinion that the experience that had been acquired in the present war was that which best fitted officers for command. In a short time after assuming command his division and brigade officers were all young men, and all had grown up with and had been developed by hard service in cavalry since the outbreak of the war. That his plans were good and his views correct is apparent from the service his corps performed; and in a few months after taking command he had with it three times met and defeated in the open field the whole of the enemy's mounted force, and had taken an important part in many other engagements.

Even his success and the proofs he had given of the value of cavalry, when properly used and led, were not sufficient to overcome the force of traditions and customs, and among higher authorities the idea still prevailed that the mounted force was

secondary to, and should be used for, the protection, convenience, and relief of the infantry. The corps was not united as a body except in occasional instances, and the different divisions were scattered, while the commanding general was expected to remain at the headquarters of the army and perform duty more as a staff officer in transmitting orders than as the actual commander of a body of combatant troops. Serious differences of opinion on these questions between Generals Meade and Pleasonton had from time to time occurred, and at last had gone so far that the latter officer could no longer retain his command, and the vacancy occurred which General Sheridan, at the suggestion of General Halleck, was selected to fill.

It has been generally believed that General Grant had himself chosen Sheridan as the leader of cavalry for the Eastern army, but in his autobiography we are told that he had no preference for any individual for that position, and that in consulting with General Halleck upon filling the existing vacancy, he had remarked that it would be desirable to replace Pleasonton with some officer of the Western army. General Halleck at once suggested Sheridan as the most competent officer for the place, and the orders for him to report for new duties were issued upon that advice.

When the orders appeared that announced the appointment of General Sheridan as commander of the cavalry corps, it must be said that they were not received with much cordiality, or that the troops affected by them were pleased by the changes made. The corps had developed and improved by a system of evolution and survival of the fittest, and all the



leaders it had ever had under whom it had gained success or established reputation had been selected from its own ranks, and had served in it throughout the war. General Sheridan had commanded with distinction a division of infantry in the Western army; but in those days men engaged in active service had few opportunities of learning the history or career of officers with whom they were not closely associated, and very little was known of the details of his service and the gallant conduct for which he

had been noted. It was not known that he had ever served with or in command of cavalry, and the prejudice that has always existed, and will always exist, among mounted troops against being placed under the orders of an officer whose experience has been obtained in other arms of the service, affected to some extent his reception by his new command. Again, some experiences from which the Army of the Potomac had previously suffered had not induced the belief that the West was the point of the compass from which the advent of wise men bringing the rich gifts of success and victory was to be confidently expected.

His appearance at that time to a casual observer seen under circumstances that did not call for or as the exhibition of the qualities that distinguished him when he was actively discharging his more arduous duties was not so impressive and did not in any degree indicate the man he was. Short and very slight in figure, much younger than his actual age, which was then thirty-three, reticent, and entirely without assertion in speech and manner, he was not to or appreciated by his men and officers to his active service in the field which soon be-

gan displayed his many excellent qualities as a cavalry leader.

On inspecting his new command he found the men to be in good condition and well-disciplined and equipped, but badly supplied with horses, and these were thin and much run down by excessive work. In the past winter, as before, while infantry and artillery had been at rest and enjoying opportunities for refitting and replacing the losses caused by field service, the work of the cavalry had been more laborious and exacting than that required in active service, and in all times, and under the severest conditions of the weather, a continuous picket line of mounted troops, about sixty miles in length, had been maintained around the entire army; and to furnish these outposts with sufficient men required the constant service of one third of the effective cavalry force, and occasionally of one half.

While hard for men to support this work, the effect upon the horses was most injurious, as, taken from their camps when they were at the best poorly supplied with forage, they were at the outposts during tours of duty each of three consecutive days, obliged to be kept constantly saddled, entirely unprotected from storm and cold, at work day and night, and receiving about a half ration of grain, without hay or long forage of any kind. The effect of this hard work was soon apparent, and no other service could be had from the animals whose few days of rest in camp, in the intervals of this work, were not sufficient to restore their condition, and mounted drills and proper training of men and horses became impossible.

The injurious effect of this use of cavalry was



but too evident, and the first effort made by General Sheridan after assuming command was to insist upon the abandonment of this excessive picket duty, and in this, after much discussion and against strong opposition, he succeeded, and, collecting his men in their division camps, he obtained for them and their horses a rest of some two weeks, in which they could be brought into condition to take an effective part in the campaign that was soon to open. It need not be said how grateful this relief from harassing, injurious, and useless labor was to the command, and this effort of their new commander for the welfare of his troops was cordially appreciated. This change in the duties of the cavalry of the army was but the first of many changes in their methods of service and employment that General Sheridan saw were necessary, and which caused frequent discussions between General Meade, who was much attached to the old system, and himself.

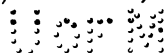
General Sheridan maintained that the functions of a large body of cavalry attached to an active army were not limited to the guarding of wagon trains, the furnishing of advanced guards and flankers to columns of infantry, and the protection by heavy lines of pickets of the repose and tranquillity of infantry and artillery at rest, and, above all, he strongly insisted that his duties as commander of a corps of cavalry could not be performed by his attendance at the headquarters of the commanding general, and transmitting to different detachments of the force such orders as might be given him.

It was his belief that trains and the flanks and rear of an army could be best protected from attacks of the enemy's cavalry by seeking out and fighting

that force in the field, that the fronts of infantry columns and lines should protect themselves and leave cavalry free for independent operations, and that a large force of cavalry, properly organized and led, acting as a unit, could be used effectively and with good results against both the cavalry and infantry of the enemy, while the same force broken into detachments and operating at different points, without plan or combined action, would be almost, if not entirely useless.

These differences of opinion continued, and the cavalry corps was to some extent hampered by a partial continuance of the old system, until the time of the battles of the Wilderness, when General Meade saw fit to withdraw his opposition to the views of General Sheridan, and thenceforth the cavalry corps became in fact an organized, compact, and actually existent force, with the rights and responsibilities of other army corps, and was consequently able to perform better service and accomplish greater results than at any previous period of its history.

At the opening of the campaign of 1864 the cavalry corps of the Army of the Potomac contained an effective force of ten thousand officers and men who could be put in line of battle. The men were well disciplined, and a majority had seen from two to three years of active service; all were well armed and equipped and fairly mounted, as the two weeks of relief from picket duty that had been obtained, and more abundant forage, had done much to restore the condition of the horses. It was organized in three divisions, about equal in strength, which were commanded by Generals Torbert, Gregg, and Wilson, in the order named.



On May 4, 1864, the Army of the Potomac moved out of the lines it had occupied through the past winter, and, crossing the Rapidan River, entered the Wilderness country on the south bank of that river, where it was expected that the enemy would be met, and on the morning of the 5th General Sheridan, with the First and Second Divisions of his corps, was in position at Chancellorsville, in front of and on the left flank of the army.

The Third Division, under General Wilson, had been detached, and at the crossing of the river had preceded the right of the army, and on the 5th received orders direct from General Meade to make an extended reconnoissance in his front. In the execution of this order General Wilson met a large force of the enemy's cavalry in his front, and as he attempted to fall back found that the infantry of the enemy, advancing against our army, had occupied the roads in his rear. The first known of this condition of affairs was learned by a message from General Meade, who reported that Wilson had been cut off, and ordered that troops be sent to his relief. General Wilson, after a brisk fight, succeeded in getting around the right flank of the cavalry in his front and fell back on the road to Todd's Tavern, being severely pressed by the enemy as he retreated.

Presuming this road would be that on which he would retire, General Sheridan sent the Second Division, under Gregg, to Todd's Tavern, where the Third was met, and this fresh force attacking briskly, the enemy was soon driven back and pursued until night put an end to the engagement.

On the 6th the cavalry, after successfully holding its lines against an attack, was ordered to the rear to

protect the trains, which were erroneously supposed to be in danger, and on the 7th were heavily engaged with the enemy's cavalry at Todd's Tavern and lost many men in retaking the position abandoned the day before.

The infantry of the army had during these three days been engaged in the actions that are known as the battles of the Wilderness, and no decisive result having been obtained, a general movement to the left was ordered, with the intention of occupying Spottsylvania Court House and thus turning the right flank of the Confederate army.

This movement of the infantry commenced on the night of the 7th, and General Sheridan gave orders to his cavalry to commence operations at daylight on the 8th, for the purpose of keeping the roads clear and protecting the march of the infantry columns from interference by the enemy. The First and Second Divisions, then at Todd's Tavern, were by different roads to advance to Snell's bridge over the Po River, about two miles in front of Spottsylvania Court House, being joined there by the Third Division, that had been ordered to occupy the Court House, and then move out to the bridge to hold that point until the infantry had occupied the new positions and established its lines. Had these orders been executed, there is but little doubt that the enemy could have been held in check for a sufficient time to have permitted our infantry, marching on a clear and unobstructed road, to have reached Spottsylvania Court House in advance of the enemy, and the series of costly struggles that were afterward requisite to occupy that point would have been unnecessary.

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But one division (the Third), however, was able to act on the orders it received, for on the night of the 7th, as the infantry were moving through Todd's Tavern, General Meade arrived there some time before daylight, and in the absence of General Sheridan, whose headquarters were at a remote point where he could be in communication with the Third Division, gave orders to the commanders of the First and Second Divisions that prevented the execution of the intended plan and exposed the Third Division to serious and unexpected danger.

The First Division was ordered to take the advance of the infantry column on the direct road to the Court House, and the Second Division, instead of proceeding to Snell's bridge, was ordered to the front to establish a picket line to protect the infantry column in its march. These changes of instructions and the movements that followed them were the cause of great delay and loss of life, and defeated the operation in which the troops were then engaged. The moving column of infantry was halted for a long time to allow the First Division to pick its way through the ranks and get to the front, and as this had to be done in an intensely dark night and on a narrow road bordered on both sides by the almost impenetrable thickets that cover the Wilderness country, great confusion was caused in both infantry and cavalry, and much valuable time consumed that was of vital importance in an operation the success of which depended upon rapidity of movement. When at last the march was resumed the advance was slow, as the road was narrow and the woods on all sides prevented any formation of cavalry lines or the deployment of mounted skirmishers or flankers.

The cavalry of necessity were dismounted, and the long columns of led horses that could be placed only on the roads were an embarrassment and incumbrance to all the troops. The Second Division was uselessly employed and saw no enemy to attack, as the Confederate army, as soon as the movement of ours was known, was pressed as rapidly as possible to the point for which we aimed, and succeeded, in the absence of opposition, in first reaching it.

The Third Division alone executed the orders of the previous night, and, driving the enemy's cavalry before it, reached Spottsylvania Court House before 9 A. M., and was advancing out to Snell's bridge when it encountered the columns of the enemy's infantry and was compelled to fall back with some loss. By the time the troops moving from Todd's Tavern reached the Court House it was occupied in force by Longstreet's corps, upon whom neither our cavalry nor the Fifth Corps, which assaulted the position, could make any impression.

Later in the day, when Generals Meade and Sheridan met, a very serious discussion as to these movements of the cavalry arose, and the former, who on trying occasions was not always temperate in language or just in criticism, severely blamed the cavalry for alleged inefficiency, and charged particularly that it had impeded the march of the infantry on the road to Spottsylvania. General Sheridan warmly defended the conduct of his troops, justly remarking that he was not responsible for placing the First Division in front of the infantry, for the inaction of the Second, and the exposure of the Third to disaster, as these had resulted from orders given without his knowledge, and overruling those which he had issued.

He added that operations of the nature he had been engaged in and the interference of higher authority with his plans and orders without his knowledge would soon render the best troops worthless; that if allowed to exercise his proper authority and control over the troops under his orders, he was satisfied that he could defeat the Confederate cavalry, and in that way best protect the army and trains from attacks or surprises by that force; but if the practice of giving orders to the troops, or directing movements without advice or notice to him, was continued, he would decline any further responsibility for the corps, or any part in its direction.

The result of this conversation was more fortunate than that which generally attends a sharp controversy between a superior and a subordinate officer, for when General Meade shortly afterward reported this interview to General Grant, and mentioned that Sheridan had expressed himself as confident of beating the Confederate cavalry, General Grant quietly remarked: "Did he say so? Then let him go out and do it." And from the day this brief but important order was given the last of the obstructions that had prevented the full development of the cavalry corps ceased to exist.

On the same day orders were given to concentrate the corps and to operate against the enemy's cavalry, with further instructions that when supplies were exhausted the troops should march to Haxall's Landing on the James River, after communicating with General Butler, who was then carrying on his campaign against Petersburg and Richmond, and, procuring supplies, return to the army.

On the night of the 8th of May the three divi-



sions of the cavalry corps were brought together at the Aldrich House, in rear of the lines of the army, and there supplied as far as practicable from the stores with the trains. Sufficient ammunition and three days' rations for the men were obtained, but of forage only half of one day's supply could be procured, and there was little prospect of any additional supply for many days.

The intended movement that would deprive the Army of the Potomac of the presence of the bulk of its mounted force at a time when it was about to engage in a series of severe engagements has been criticised as a strategic error by some who hold that an army should under all circumstances be held together in face of the enemy, but many reasons concurred to render it desirable. The country in which the army was then operating was peculiarly unsuitable for the operations of cavalry, covered as it was for miles in every direction with dense thickets that were impenetrable to horsemen, and intersected by few and narrow paths which permitted of movement only in long-extended and thin columns, which could not be deployed. The question of forage for the animals was also a controlling one, for this country, which for three years had been constantly occupied by one or the other of the contending armies, had been stripped of all resources, and the wagon trains of the army, which were now its sole dependence for supplies, were utterly unable to provide and distribute the forage required for the wants of ten or twelve thousand horses, amounting to nearly one hundred tons each day. As has been seen, at the end of four days' field service but one half day's ration of forage could now be supplied, and by that

the stores were exhausted. The best answer to such objections, however, is the practical one—that the intended operation was in all respects successful, and obtained, at slight cost in men or material, every result for which it was designed.

At a conference with his division commanders General Sheridan explained the plan of proposed operations and the route he expected to follow, and laid particular stress upon the fact that the expedition was not to be a simple raid through the enemy's country for the purpose of destroying supplies and cutting communications, but was in the fullest sense a hostile movement, the main purpose of which was to meet, engage, and make every effort to defeat the cavalry of the enemy wherever it could be found.

Though General Sheridan had been but a short time with his command, he had studied and appreciated its qualities, and was satisfied that he had under his orders a disciplined and reliable force, that only needed opportunity to render efficient service, and that was in every way equal, if not superior, to the enemy he expected to encounter, and in the engagements that had occurred since crossing the Rapidan his troops had on every occasion been successful when engaged with the Confederate cavalry.

In the early periods of the war, and while the Federal cavalry was new to the field, their enemies were undoubtedly better mounted and individually better horsemen, and these circumstances, together with their knowledge of the country, gave them great advantages in the scouts, skirmishes, raids, and actions by small detachments that for nearly two years comprised the operations of the cavalry. As time went on, the progress of organization and dis-

cipline and constant service in the field rapidly trained and developed our horsemen, and early in 1863 they proved themselves to be as effective soldiers as their antagonists, possessed of better drill and discipline, and their superiors in all actions where large bodies of troops were massed and engaged in actual personal conflict.

The troops also had already acquired confidence in their leader, and anticipated success under his command. They had observed and appreciated his efforts to relieve them of useless and wearing toil; they even perceived that they were better supplied and cared for than at any previous period, and while no engagements of great importance or serious consequence had yet occurred, the success that attended every operation, and the constant and inspiring presence on the field of their leader on all occasions where active and dangerous service was required, gave promise of vigorous and successful campaigns in the future.

On the morning of May 9, 1864, the cavalry corps began the expedition into the country of the enemy. The three divisions, after some detachments were made to remain with the main army and the horses unfit for hard service were weeded out, contained nine thousand men, and were accompanied by seven batteries of horse artillery and a train of ammunition wagons. For forage and rations other than those the men carried on their persons, dependence was placed on what might be taken from the enemy, and from this source the needed supplies were readily obtained. The corps in one long column, nearly twelve miles in length, marched eastward until the telegraph road leading southwardly from

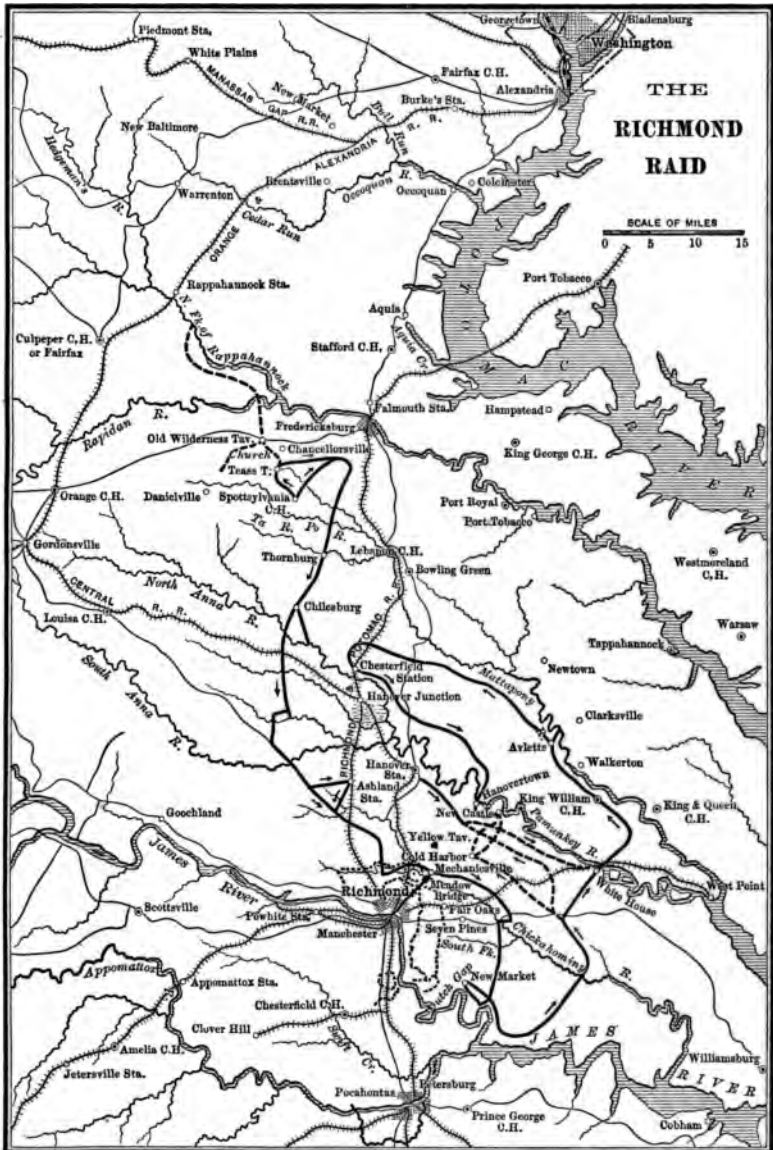
Fredericksburg was reached, and thence, turning to the south, pursued that road through Thornburg to Anderson's crossing of the North Anna River, which was reached, after a march of thirty-three miles, just as the sun went down.

The right flank of Lee's army, which was then occupying Spottsylvania Court House and engaged with our infantry, was passed without any contest, and nothing was heard of the enemy until the rear of the column had crossed the Ta River at Thornburg, where a strong attack was made by Gordon's brigade of Confederate cavalry. General Stuart, the commander of the Confederate cavalry, did not learn of this movement until a large portion of our column had reached a point south of the position he was occupying in rear of the Confederate army, and he therefore marched with the greater part of his force directly southward to Davenport's bridge over the North Anna, intending thence to proceed to Beaver Dam Station, on the Virginia Central Railroad, where was placed an important depot of supplies, and then oppose the head of our column. He ordered a strong and continued attack to be made on the rear of our column in the hope that he could succeed in so delaying our march as to reach the threatened point in advance of our troops. A brigade of the Second Division which acted as rear guard of the column was able to resist every attack from the pursuing force and prevent any interruption of the march, so that the advance of the main column reached the station at Beaver Dam without meeting the enemy any force and found it entirely unprotected. General Custer, who was in command of the leading brigade, on reaching the station rescued four hun-

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dred of our men who had been captured in the Wilderness battles and who were on their way to Richmond in charge of a guard. Two locomotives, three trains of cars, eight miles of railroad and telegraph lines, a million rations, a large quantity of forage, and nearly all the medical stores of the Confederate army were destroyed, reserving only what was necessary to furnish full supplies to our own troops.

That night the First Division was encamped on the south bank of the river, the other two on the north side, and the Second Division was engaged until a late hour with the enemy that had been following the rear guard. In the morning the Second and Third Divisions were again attacked while crossing the river, but repulsed the enemy with small loss, and the First Division encountered the skirmishers of Stuart's force, which was approaching the station from Davenport's bridge.

At Beaver Dam Station, where our troops were soon massed, they were between Stuart and Richmond, and could reach that city by a march of thirty miles over a good and unobstructed road, and Stuart—who was much perplexed by the movements of our force, which did not, as on previous raids made by the cavalry of both armies, seek to avoid an engagement with a pursuing force—at last determined to throw his troops between our columns and Richmond, and, passing around our rear with all his command, he pressed forward toward Richmond by a circuitous and much longer road than that followed by his adversary, who, after an easy march of eighteen miles, crossed the South Anna River at Ground Squirrel bridge on the afternoon of May 10th and went into camp on the south bank, where a plentiful



body of the enemy was met during the day, and the few skirmishers that hung about the head and rear of the column for purposes of observation were not in sufficient strength to cause any delay and but a trifling loss.

At three o'clock on the morning of May 11th a brigade from the Second Division marched to Ashland Station, on the Fredericksburg Railroad, some eight miles east from the camp of the past night, and, driving off a small force of the enemy which occupied the place, destroyed the station, some supplies, a locomotive and train, and did considerable injury to the roadbed. While this work was going on, the head of Stuart's column, which was pushing forward to Richmond, reached Ashland, and a brisk skirmish occurred, attended with heavy loss to both sides. Our troops fell back, as ordered in the event of meeting a superior force of the enemy, and, marching southward along the railway, burning such bridges as were met and skirmishing with a pursuing force, joined the main column at Allen's Station, where the road from Ground Squirrel bridge to Richmond intersects the railway.

This unexpected appearance of what he believed to be a large force of our troops at Ashland had the effect of making General Stuart so uncertain as to our movements that he detached two brigades to follow and observe this brigade, while, with the rest of his command, he hurried on toward Richmond and succeeded in reaching the Yellow Tavern on the Brook turnpike, nine miles north of the city, in advance of our troops, and there, placing his men in a defensive position, awaited our attack.

Sheridan's First Division, commanded by General Merritt, led the attack, and the enemy were driven back several hundred yards to the east of the turnpike, but there rallied, and for some time firmly held the ground. The Third Division and a brigade of the Second were formed on Merritt's right, and a general assault by the whole line was made. On our left were two brigades of the First Division dismounted, and the right consisted of the brigades of Generals Custer of the First and Chapman of the Third Division mounted, and supported by another brigade of the Third. The mounted troops charged into and through the left of the enemy and his artillery, capturing two pieces and many prisoners, and the dismounted brigades, advancing at the same time and pouring in a heavy fire, drove back and put to flight the remainder of the enemy. General Gregg at the same time charged and routed the force that had been sent from Ashland to attack our rear, and when the engagement was concluded early in the afternoon the road to Richmond was clear, and not an enemy was to be seen in front of any portion of our lines. The losses on both sides were heavy, but those of the Confederates, who left most of their dead and wounded on the field, exceeded ours, and they also lost many prisoners. General Stuart, the commander of their cavalry corps, was mortally wounded, and General Gordon, commanding a brigade in the force that attacked our rear, was killed.

A reconnoissance toward Richmond drove from the outer line of the intrenchments about that city the small force by which it was occupied, and within this line a road was found by which it was thought the command could be marched to Fair Oaks, a few

miles east of Richmond—a desirable point to occupy if the reports that had been received from inhabitants were true, that General Butler had with his army reached a point on the south side of the James River, within four miles of Richmond. About midnight the troops moved from the Yellow Tavern, and, marching down the Brook turnpike, passed through the first line of intrenchments and were formed in a large open field in front of the second line and within three miles of the city.

No opposition was met in this movement, but on reaching the ground where the troops were to be formed it appeared that the enemy, anticipating such a change in our position, had placed there a large number of torpedoes or loaded shells connected by wires or cords attached to friction tubes inserted in the shells, which would explode when these connections were entangled about the feet of horses or men.

Some horses were killed and men wounded by these devices, which in the darkness it was difficult to avoid, so the prisoners who had been taken were brought to the front, and, under a strong guard and with some compulsion, they were placed at work to search out and remove the weapons their comrades had prepared for their enemy. Before daylight the torpedoes were all discovered and removed, and for safe keeping were carefully stored in the cellar of the owner of the property, who had actively assisted in the preparation of what he had called "Yankee traps."

The presence of our troops in so threatening a position caused great excitement and alarm in Richmond, where an assault was hourly expected, and every possible exertion was made to defend the city.

The second line of works was well supplied with artillery and four to five thousand irregular troops were placed in the intrenchments commanded by General Bragg, and during the night these were re-enforced by three brigades of infantry from the army that was opposing General Butler on the James River. The main body of the cavalry force that had been defeated at the Yellow Tavern, now under General Fitzhugh Lee, had retreated to Ashland, and thence moved to Mechanicsville, on the north bank of the Chickahominy, where it partially destroyed the Meadow bridges over that stream, and, holding a position in rear of the left of our cavalry, hoped to prevent any movement toward the James River, while one brigade still hung upon our right and rear to close the road by which we had advanced. The night was very dark, and this and heavy rains made the march from Yellow Tavern slow and tedious, but by daylight of the 12th the troops were in position, and the Third Division was advancing toward Fair Oaks. An assault was made upon the enemy's works, which were found to be strongly defended. Our troops were here repulsed, and before the attack could be renewed it was learned that the reports of the presence of Butler's forces in the immediate vicinity of Richmond were untrue, and no useful purpose would be served by pursuing the Fair Oaks road. The First Division was now ordered to attack and force a crossing at the Meadow bridges, and so repair them that they could be used by the troops. The flooring of the bridges had been destroyed, but the heavy rains of the previous night and continued showers during the morning had prevented their being burned, and



the stringpieces and cross ties were not injured. A working party was at once engaged in making a new flooring with fence rails and such boards and other timber as could be obtained from neighboring barns and houses, and protected as far as possible by the fire of the remainder of the division. This work was difficult and dangerous, as it was performed under the fire of the enemy, who swept the bridge with their artillery and small arms. Two regiments dismounted, crossed over on the stringpieces, and attacked the defending force, but were driven back after a spirited struggle. While this was going on the work had been rapidly pressed, and in a short time General Merritt, with his entire division, was able to cross dismounted, and again attacking the Confederate force, drove it from the line of temporary breastworks it had thrown up to cover the bridge, and after putting it to flight pursued in the direction of Gaines's Mill.

While the First Division was thus engaged a large body of Confederate infantry moved out from their intrenchments and, supported by the fire of their artillery, attacked the lines of the Second and Third Divisions. This attempt met with some success against the Third Division, which held our left, but the enemy soon came in front of a heavy line of dismounted men of the Second Division, armed with repeating carbines, which General Gregg had posted in a thickly wooded ravine in his front, and this unexpected and destructive fire with the shot and shell from five batteries of horse artillery which had been concentrated in a favorable position soon brought the attacking force to a halt; and while they were hesitating, the Third Division, which had been rallied,

made a bold dash on their right flank, and they were driven back to their intrenchments after suffering severe loss. This conflict had scarcely ended when the body of cavalry that for two days had been hanging about the rear of our column made an attack down the Brook turnpike, but was evidently dispirited, and did not act with much vigor. They were quickly repulsed and driven off by one brigade of the Second Division, and this proved their last effort. By twelve o'clock the fighting in front of Richmond was ended, and for several hours the Second and Third Divisions remained undisturbed in the field, in view of the enemy's lines, resting and grazing their horses, while the wagons and artillery were being passed over the bridges in rear of the First Division, which was pressing the enemy's cavalry toward Gaines's Mill. About four o'clock they withdrew and marched toward Gainesville, whence General Merritt had sent word that he had again met the enemy, but before the other troops arrived he had driven off the opposing force, and the corps passed the night in camp undisturbed.

This engagement of the 12th of May was a severe blow to the enemy, for not only did their cavalry sustain a second and severe defeat, but their infantry force defending Richmond was beaten in the open field with heavy loss.

The troops under General Sheridan, after an undisturbed march from Gaines's Mill, reached Haxall's Landing, on the James River, on the 14th of May, and communicated with General Butler, whose army occupied Bermuda Hundred, on the south bank. Here the wounded and prisoners were sent North, and supplies of rations, forage, and ammunition obtained,

and on the night of the 17th the corps started on its return to the Army of the Potomac. Some demonstrations were made on the return march to convey the impression that another movement on Richmond was intended, which served to give time to repair the bridge over the Pamunkey River at White House and inflict further damage to the enemy's railroads. On the 22d the whole corps was united at White House and crossed the river on that day, and on the 25th reached Chesterfield Station, on the North Anna River, to which point the Army of the Potomac had advanced after the severe battles at Spottsylvania Court House.

Thus ended the first expedition made by the cavalry since it had been placed under the command of General Sheridan, and the result was highly commended by Generals Grant and Meade. The movement had been a complete success, and all the purposes for which it was intended had been accomplished. For two weeks at a critical time our supply departments had been relieved from the heavy work of subsisting more than ten thousand men and horses, and for the same time the Confederate cavalry had been so occupied that it could make no attempts to impede or interfere with our trains or the regular supply of the army. Twenty days' supplies for Lee's army had been destroyed, his railroad communications with Richmond had been several times broken, and his power for aggressive movement seriously impaired by anxiety and uncertainty concerning the safety of the rear of his army. The Confederate cavalry had been kept incessantly moving to protect Richmond or defend itself and compelled to make marches far longer and more exhausting than those



of our troops, and wherever met had suffered decisive defeat and severe loss, which included the death of the most prominent and successful cavalry general of the Southern armies. The good results of this operation were not confined to those obtained during the time it continued, but had a lasting effect upon the future conduct of the Confederate cavalry, as from that time until the close of the war it ceased to be distinguished for the enterprise and boldness in aggressive movement for which it was formerly remarkable, and in place of the frequent and successful raids upon our trains and communications to which it had been accustomed, it now found full occupation in defending itself from attack or attempting to check hostile demonstrations made by the Federal cavalry against the enemy's lines.

Our cavalry returned in excellent spirits, and though considerable loss had been sustained, the success that followed more than compensated for it. The men were confident in their leader, and fully satisfied of their own ability to meet and conquer their opponents in the field and to move at will through the enemy's country, and while for two weeks they had been constantly at work, their marches had not been fatiguing, their success had been decisive, all their wants had been abundantly supplied, and men and horses returned in better condition than that which existed when the movement began.

On the 26th of May a further movement of the Army of the Potomac to the left was ordered, and General Sheridan, with the First and Second Divisions of his corps, had the advance. The Third Division was

sent to the right of the army, and then continued practically detached from the cavalry corps and acting under the direct orders of General Meade for a period of nearly two months. After moving down the north bank of the Pamunkey River, and during the night demonstrating at several crossings, the two divisions, supported by a division of infantry, were massed at daylight of the 27th, and a canvas pontoon bridge was thrown over the river. The First Division soon passed the river and vigorously attacked a force of Confederate cavalry, which was driven back on Hanover town, and the Second Division also crossing, the way was clear for our infantry, which crossed on the 28th and took up a position in rear of the cavalry lines.

On the morning of the 28th, as much uncertainty existed concerning the position occupied by the enemy, the Second Division of cavalry was ordered southward toward Mechanicsville, and about a mile beyond Hawes's Shop discovered the enemy's cavalry, which was dismounted and holding a line in thick woods, defended by a breastwork of logs and fence rails. The force found here consisted of Hampton's and Fitzhugh Lee's divisions and a brigade of South Carolina cavalry armed with long-range rifles, who were at first taken for infantry. Our men were rapidly dismounted and attacked the enemy, and from noon until sunset a long, stubborn and bloody contest continued, in which neither side was able to obtain any decisive advantage. The First Division, that was on the extreme right of our lines, was ordered to assist that engaged, but the infantry was so slow in relieving it from the lines it held that but one brigade, that of General Custer, came up in

time to take part in the action. This was formed in column at the center of General Gregg's line and between his two brigades; then the whole force charged together, and after a severe struggle carried the works of the enemy, who retreated, leaving his dead and wounded in our hands, together with a number of prisoners, from whom it was learned that the Confederate infantry were occupying a line about four miles in rear of this battlefield. From the prisoners it was also learned that much of the very stubborn resistance exhibited in this action was due to the presence in the field of the troops from South Carolina that have been referred to. This brigade, raised in South Carolina at the beginning of the war, had never before left that State or had seen any active service, and when with full ranks, and weapons and uniforms all fresh and untarnished by war or service, they joined the veterans who had been for three years exposed to the losses and trials of active duty in the field, their reception was not of the warmest, and it was not thought that much could be expected from them.

The existence of this prejudice and their own desire to show themselves at least the equals of their comrades caused them to exhibit a desperate courage in this their first engagement, and, as was said by veterans on both sides, they were too inexperienced to know when they had suffered defeat, and continued to resist long after it was apparent that the position they held was turned and efforts to maintain it were hopeless.

The army now began the movements that placed it in position to engage in the battle of Cold Harbor, and as White House, on the Pamunkey River, had been

selected as the base of supply and the point where re-enforcements from the Army of the James were to be landed, the cavalry under General Sheridan on the left was occupied in protecting that important position and keeping open the roads between it and the main body of our troops.

On the 30th of May the First Division had a hard but finally successful contest with the enemy's cavalry, and drove it to within a mile and a half of Cold Harbor. On the 31st the First Division again attacked the enemy, his force now consisting of Fitzhugh Lee's division of cavalry and a brigade of infantry, and after a brisk engagement were again successful, driving the enemy from the intrenchments that had been made around Cold Harbor, and occupied that important point. The force that had gained this success was increased by the arrival on the field after the action of one brigade of the Second Division; but it was known that the enemy was moving a division of infantry in this direction, and that another division was between the cavalry and our infantry columns, of which the nearest was nine miles distant. It appears that at headquarters of the army there had been no expectation that the cavalry could succeed in capturing this place, and no preparation had been made to take advantage of such a possible success. General Sheridan did not consider it prudent to remain with his small force in the isolated position in which he found himself, and informed General Meade of his intention to withdraw during the night.

The last of the troops were leaving the lines when orders were received that the place was too important to be abandoned and must be held at all

hazards, and that the Sixth Corps would be at once sent by a forced march to relieve the cavalry. Upon these orders being received, the cavalry, already on the march, was ordered back, and Cold Harbor re-occupied without opposition, the movement in retreat having fortunately escaped the attention of the enemy. Before daylight our troops were in position and had fortified their line by using the breastworks from which the Confederates had been driven on the previous day, and the men, dismounted and well supplied with ammunition, were ranged in a long thin line behind the improvised intrenchment, with orders that the position *must* be held. Two assaults were made by Kershaw's division of Confederate infantry, but both were driven back with severe loss by the fire of the repeating carbines of the cavalry and our batteries of horse artillery, and by nine o'clock in the morning the arrival of the Sixth Corps relieved the mounted troops in the exposed position they had secured and held against a largely superior force of the enemy. During several succeeding days, and while the infantry were engaged in the battle of Cold Harbor, these two divisions of cavalry were occupied in guarding the left flank of the army, while the Third Division, under General Wilson, did similar duty on the right, and, except for some unimportant skirmishes, were not actively engaged.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE TREVILIAN EXPEDITION.—PETERSBURG.— DEEP BOTTOM.

AFTER the failure of our army in the assaults made on the lines of the enemy at Cold Harbor it was determined to continue the movement to the left and place our forces on the south bank of the James River, there to renew the movements against the enemy's capital. In effecting this flank movement through a very difficult and much obstructed country, and to secure the safe passage of the large trains attached to the army, it was of great importance to avoid obstruction or attacks by the enemy's cavalry, and a second expedition was planned that would keep the Confederate mounted troops fully occupied during the time our infantry was marching to and crossing the James.

Besides this primary object of the movement, General Hunter, who had about this time been engaged in an advance southwardly through the Shenandoah Valley, had been directed to move on Charlottesville, and there unite his troops with those of General Sheridan, to whom this had been indicated as the objective point of his expedition. From that place the united force was directed to return to the Army of the Potomac, destroying on its way the



Virginia Central Railroad and also damaging the James River Canal.

Two divisions of the cavalry corps were ordered to make this expedition, and one remained with the main army, which it should accompany on the march. General Sheridan concentrated the First and Second Divisions of his corps, which he selected for the expedition at Newcastle Ferry, on the Pamunkey, and there fitted them out. These two divisions, which since the opening of the campaign had been constantly on the march and under fire, had suffered considerable loss in killed and wounded and in horses that had been killed in action or worn out in service, and now could not present more than six thousand effective mounted men. The troops were well supplied with rations and forage, and a light canvas pontoon train formed part of the equipment, which was of great use in passing the rivers that crossed the line of march. The expedition moved out on the morning of the 7th of June, and for three days followed the north bank of the North Anna, crossing that river to the south bank on the afternoon of June 10th, and encamping on the road leading to Trevilian Station. During this and the previous day scouting parties of the enemy were frequently met, and their activity and enterprise indicated the presence of a large force of the enemy in the immediate vicinity.

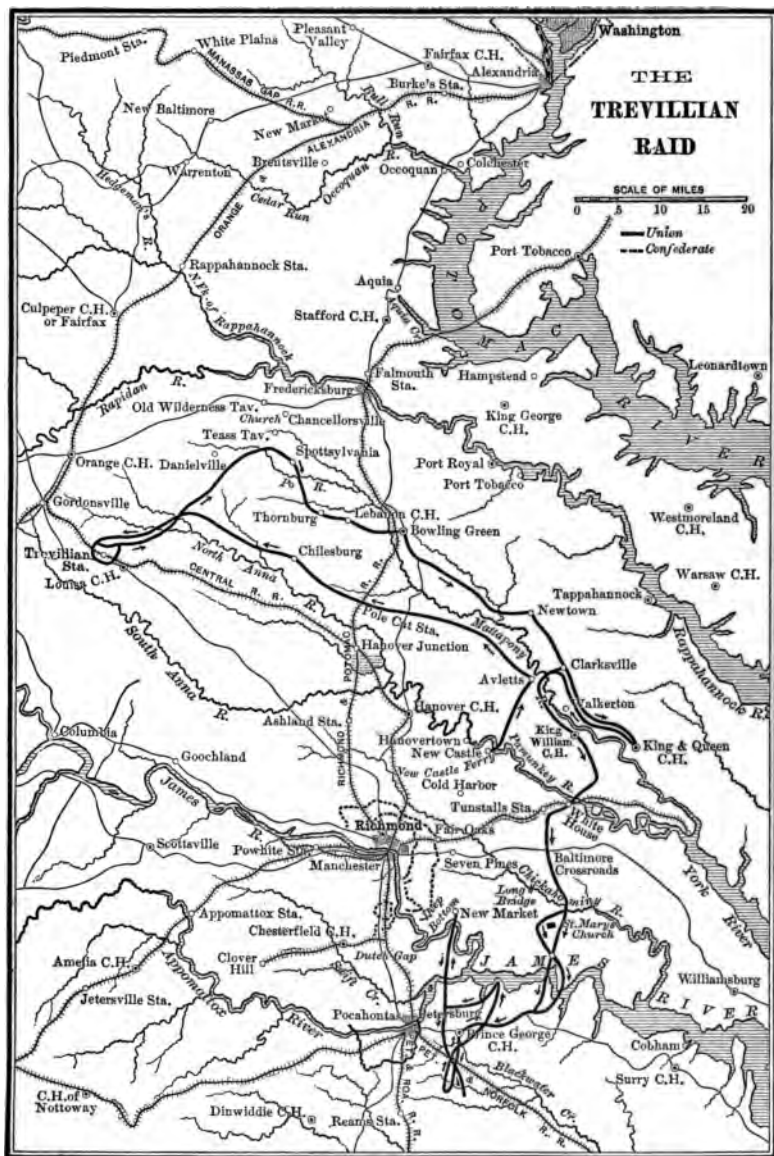
From prisoners it was learned that Hampton, with his men and Fitzhugh Lee's divisions of cavalry, had left the Confederate lines as soon as information of the movement of our cavalry had been received, and, marching by a much shorter line, had gained a position in advance, and that Breckin-



ridge's division of infantry, which had been detached to oppose the movements of General Hunter, had passed up the railroad and was now somewhere near Gordonsville.

At daylight on the 11th the march to Trevilian Station was resumed, and the first division soon found the enemy in force, posted behind a strong line of breastworks about three miles north of the depot. An attack on their front was at once made by two brigades, and a third—that of General Custer—was sent to the right and rear of the enemy's line, which was found to consist of Hampton's division. General Custer succeeded in reaching the rear of the Confederate line, and at once charged upon the led horses, wagons, and caissons which were there collected, and of which he captured a great number and succeeded in reaching and holding Trevilian Station. While thus engaged he was attacked by a brigade of Hampton's division and by the troops of Fitzhugh Lee, who were that morning on the march from Louisa Court House to join forces with Hampton. A desperate fight now occurred, and the captured property was retaken by the enemy, as General Custer, who was for the time almost surrounded, was obliged to act entirely in his own defense, and did not have within his lines sufficient space in which to keep it collected.

As soon as the heavy firing showed that the rear of the enemy had been attacked the movement against his front was renewed, and the Confederate troops were driven from their position. Hampton's force was driven through and westward from Trevilian Station, and, a portion of his troops in their rout falling into Custer's lines, about five hundred





prisoners were taken. Fitzhugh Lee's division was also defeated and was driven back in the road to Louisa Court House, and many miles now separated the two divisions, which were not reunited until noon of the following day, when Fitzhugh Lee, by a march around our position, succeeded in joining General Hampton.

This engagement, which lasted for the greater part of the day, was a very severe one, and the losses of both sides were heavy. The most serious injury that the Federal troops sustained consisted in the great expenditure of ammunition that was needed to secure the success they had gained and which could not be supplied or replaced in the enemy's country.

During the night and the following day the men were employed in destroying the railroad, which was effectually broken up between Louisa Court House and Trevilian Station. It was learned that General Hunter had not marched toward Charlottesville, as was expected, but was moving toward Lynchburg, and so increasing the distance between himself and the cavalry as to render a junction of the two commands scarcely possible. In addition to the two divisions of cavalry in front of Sheridan, Breckenridge's division of infantry was at Gordonsville, and would be one of the many obstacles to overcome before General Hunter's army could be reached. The number of our wounded—five hundred in all—and the same number of prisoners, also affected the question of a further advance, as all of these must be abandoned if the forward movement was continued.

General Sheridan concluded that as the plan for joining the army of General Hunter could not be carried out it would be best to return to the Army

of the Potomac by slow and easy marches, which would compel the attention of Hampton's cavalry, and, keeping him engaged in attendance upon our column and watching our movements the army would have ample time to cross the James River unmolested by any mounted force. As events proved, the decision to abandon further effort to join Hunter was eminently correct, as that officer, after a feeble demonstration against Lynchburg, where he arrived before our cavalry, even if unopposed, could have caught up with him, retreated to the westward, and, leaving the valley of the Shenandoah open to the Confederates, marched up the Kanawha Valley of West Virginia to the Ohio River.

On the afternoon of the 12th an attack was made upon Hampton's lines, which had been reformed two miles west of Trevilian Station, by the First Division and a brigade of the Second. The purpose of this movement was to gain possession of Mallory's ford, over the North Anna River, from which ran a direct road to Spottsylvania Court House, and which gave a shorter and less exposed line for returning to the Army of the Potomac than that by which the advance had been made.

The enemy was found in a strong position and well intrenched, and a severe engagement followed, which continued until night, with heavy losses and no advantage gained by either side, and, as it was apparent that the battle must be renewed on the following day and a severe contest would ensue, involving a great expenditure of the now scanty ammunition, General Sheridan resolved to fall back by the road on which he had advanced. This movement was made without interference from the enemy,

and before daylight on the 13th the whole force had recrossed the North Anna at Carpenter's ford. Such of our wounded as could not be moved—ninety in number—and the wounded Confederate prisoners were left on the field, but four hundred of our wounded and five hundred Confederate prisoners accompanied the column. On the afternoon of the 13th the march was resumed, and continued from day to day, until on the 20th the troops reached White House, on the Pamunkey River. During all this time no encounter was had with the enemy, who marched on a line parallel with that pursued by our force, and kept so close a watch upon the movements that the scouts and skirmishers of both parties were frequently in sight of each other. The line of march pursued led through Spottsylvania Court House, crossed the head waters of the Mattaponi River, and thence extended southeastwardly along the north bank of that stream.

The necessities of the wounded men and the inability of the Confederate prisoners (who were all on foot) to move rapidly compelled slow and short marches, and the whole command was dependent upon the country for all supplies. All the carts, carriages, and wagons that could be found were impressed into the service of transporting the wounded, and the corn, bacon, hogs, sheep, and cattle that could be gathered were collected by foraging parties and used for food. Fortunately, at this season grass was plentiful, and this and the stalks of the growing corn were the only forage that could be obtained for the horses. Through the whole of this period the weather was intensely hot; no rain had fallen for more than two weeks, the roads and fields were deep



with dust, and there was great suffering among all who made the journey.

In passing through Spottsylvania Court House and the country around the battlefields at that point more than a hundred of our wounded were found who had been too severely injured for removal when the army had advanced, and had since been cared for in the houses of the inhabitants. These were brought away with our troops, and it is but right to say that not one made complaint of neglect or ill treatment while the involuntary guest of an enemy. On the 18th King and Queen Court House was reached, and there was obtained the first reliable information concerning our army that had been received in nine days.

The Army of the Potomac had passed the James River and was beginning the siege of Petersburg, but a large train of wagons had been left at White House Landing, which General Sheridan was ordered to escort and protect in a march across the country to the James River. The prisoners, wounded, and some two thousand negroes that had followed the march of the troops were on the 19th sent under an escort to West Point, on the York River, where water transportation could be had to take them North, and the cavalry, freed from these impediments, marched rapidly back to Dunkirk, the nearest point at which the river was sufficiently narrow to be spanned by the pontoon bridge.

On the morning of the 20th the march to White House began, and on the way it was learned that Hampton's forces had attacked the troops that were holding the position at White House, but had not succeeded in causing any serious injury. In the afternoon White House was reached, and the cavalry,



crossing the Pamunkey the next morning, after a slight engagement drove off the enemy's troops and forced them to fall back beyond the Chickahominy. Supplies in abundance were found at White House, and for the first time in two weeks regular issues of forage and rations were distributed.

On the 22d the depot at White House was broken up and the troops found there—consisting of some fragments of infantry regiments and the long train of wagons, nine hundred in number, and extending for eight miles along the road when in motion—were marched toward the James River, preceded by the First Division of cavalry and protected on the right flank by the Second. The wagons were safely passed over the Chickahominy, and on the morning of the 24th reached Charles City Court House; but the indications of the presence of a strong force of the enemy in our front showed that it would be impossible, encumbered as our troops were, to pass through Malvern Hill to Deep Bottom, where a pontoon bridge had been placed over the James River. The trains were therefore directed to go into park at Wilcox Landing, where they could be guarded by the First Division, and the Second Division was ordered to take position at St. Mary's Church and hold that position at all hazards until sufficient time had been obtained for all the wagons to pass through Charles City Court House and reach the landing.

Hampton early in the day began concentrating his forces to resist an advance on our part or attack our column when on the march, and General Gregg, observing this, employed the morning in constructing such defensive works as could be improvised in front

of his lines. About four in the afternoon Hampton, with two divisions, attacked these lines, and a stubborn and hotly contested engagement followed that lasted until night. For more than two hours General Gregg maintained his position and drove back every assault, and it was not until he had lost nearly one fourth of his men and found his left exposed to attack by two brigades of the enemy that he determined upon a retreat. He was satisfied that sufficient time had been given to assure the safety of the train, and was embarrassed by the absence of any instructions from General Sheridan, to whom he had during the day sent repeated messengers explaining his situation. All of these couriers were either killed or captured, for not one reached the headquarters of the corps, and it was not until after nightfall, and the end of the battle, that General Sheridan learned that the division had been engaged. General Gregg fell back about three miles to Hopewell Church, where he established a new line, and at dusk beat off the enemy, who had followed up his retreating troops. From this point, later in the night, he moved to Charles City Court House, and rejoined the other division. The cavalry and train thence marched to Douthard's Landing, and were carried over the river by ferryboats.

On the morning of the 29th the last of the cavalry had crossed the river, and on the evening of the same day marched out toward Reams's Station, on the left of the army, to relieve General Wilson, who had been attacked at that place, on his return from an expedition into the enemy's lines, made with his own and Kautz's division of cavalry. This movement was made too late to benefit General Wilson, who,

however, succeeded in bringing his command into the lines by a detour to the eastward. On the 2d of July the cavalry corps was marched back to Light House Point, on the James River, and good camps were selected in which the men and animals could obtain the rest that was greatly needed, and an opportunity be had of refitting the command.

For the past two months, since the crossing of the Rapidan River, the cavalry corps had been incessantly occupied in marching and fighting, and daily in contact with the enemy. The occasions had been rare in which any portion of the force had occupied the same camp for two consecutive nights, and no supplies beyond ammunition and occasional issues of forage and subsistence had been received. For a period of forty-seven days—from June 3d to July 19th—no rain had fallen in any part of the country occupied or traveled over by our troops, and during all this time the weather was intensely hot. The dust was many inches deep on all the roads and rose in suffocating clouds when disturbed by marching columns, causing great suffering to men and animals and very serious embarrassment to prompt or active movements. The heat, dust, want of water, and scanty food had caused a greater loss in horses than that sustained in action, and the roads over which the cavalry had marched were strewn with the bodies of horses that had broken down on the march or had been shot to prevent their falling into the possession of the enemy.

Every effort had been made to supply these losses by captures from the enemy and by animals picked up by scouts or foraging parties, but these were insufficient to replace the missing animals, and when

the corps was collected at Light House Point the dismounted men numbered nearly two thousand.

For nearly a month perfect quiet continued about the lines at Petersburg. Both armies had suffered so severely during the past campaign that an opportunity for rest and re-equipment was equally necessary and, as if by mutual consent, active movements were suspended. During this period the cavalry corps commander was fully occupied in restoring his command to a condition of efficiency, and in a short time, with good food, fresh supplies of clothing, and fifteen hundred new horses, the corps, except in numbers, was as competent for work as at the opening of the campaign.

On July 26th a mine that had been constructed under the Confederate lines in front of Petersburg was completed and in a condition for immediate use, it being intended that upon the explosion of the mine an assault should be made upon the enemy's works. As a diversion in support of this operation, and to draw from the point of attack as many as possible of Lee's army, an expedition to the north bank of the James was ordered, consisting of the Second Corps, under General Hancock, and the First and Second Divisions of the cavalry corps, commanded by General Sheridan.

Leaving their camps on the night of the 26th, the troops crossed the James at Deep Bottom on the morning of the 27th, and a portion of the Second Corps, supported by the cavalry, drove the enemy from his advanced works and captured four pieces of artillery. On the 28th the two cavalry divisions advanced toward Newmarket, but encountered a strong force of infantry, by which their advance was checked.

The men were drawn back until a favorable position was reached, and then dismounted and formed in line. Kershaw's division of Confederate infantry, encouraged by the falling back of our troops, advanced to attack this line, but met so strong and determined resistance that it was driven back in confusion by the dismounted cavalry, losing two hundred and fifty prisoners and two stands of colors.

The event of this engagement and information had from prisoners showed that General Lee regarded this movement on the north bank of the James as a serious effort to turn his left flank, and was moving large bodies of troops to meet the threatened attack. During the night of the 28th and the morning of the 29th the lines of our forces were extended, and different movements of troops were made to produce the belief that re-enforcements were being constantly added. After dark on the 28th the Second Division of cavalry crossed the pontoon bridge, which had been previously covered with hay to prevent any sound of the horses' hoofs, and after daylight the next morning was marched back on foot in full sight of the enemy. Active skirmishing with the enemy was kept up during the day, and these efforts were so successful that by the evening of the 29th General Lee had brought all his army, except three divisions of infantry and one of cavalry remaining in the lines in front of Petersburg, to the north bank of the James. The explosion of the mine and the consequent assault upon the lines of the enemy had been arranged to take place before daylight of the 30th, and thus far our preparatory movements had been skillfully executed and were completely successful.

Early in the night of the 29th General Hancock's

corps was withdrawn and moved back to rejoin the main army, and until daylight the two divisions of cavalry were alone in charge of the lines. Fortunately this condition of affairs was not observed, and early in the morning of the 30th the cavalry was safely withdrawn and hurrying toward the lines around Petersburg, only to learn that by a series of inexcusable blunders the assault that followed the explosion of the mine had met with a disastrous and bloody repulse, and that an operation that had every prospect of success had resulted in nothing but an appalling list of casualties and a singularly decisive and dispiriting defeat.

On August 1, 1864, General Sheridan was relieved from the command of the cavalry corps of the Army of the Potomac and ordered to the Shenandoah Valley, thus closing the second period of his war history as a commander of cavalry within four months from the day of his assuming this command, and in that time having accomplished the most successful and brilliant campaign in which these troops had ever been engaged.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### VALLEY OF THE SHENANDOAH.—MIDDLE MILITARY DIVISION.—BATTLE OF THE OPEQUAN.

THE new command to which General Sheridan now found himself assigned was one of great importance to the country at large and to the successful conduct of the armies that were engaged in the campaign against Richmond, as it covered the country through which passed convenient, protected, and well-supplied roads, leading directly from the heart of Virginia to the city of Washington. In the past three years the Confederate forces had on four occasions made use of this natural avenue of approach to our capital, and had entirely defeated all Union troops that attempted to oppose them at any point south of the Potomac River, had captured or destroyed vast quantities of supplies, had taken many prisoners, had seriously threatened the safety of Washington, had invaded the territory of the Northern States, and completely paralyzed all offensive operations of our forces in Virginia. In addition to the actual losses that resulted from these attacks, the moral effect produced by their constant repetition and almost unvaried success was depressing upon our troops and dispiriting to the people of the North, who could not but be doubtful of the efficient



management of the contest by those to whose charge it was committed, when, year after year, they saw Confederate armies invading their territory and threatening their capital, and our troops compelled to abandon aggressive movements and concentrated to engage in defensive battles in which our defeat might have been fatal to the national existence.

The command was also one that was embarrassing to any officer by whom it might be held, as its vicinity to Washington exposed him to constant interference in the performance of his duties from superior officers at that point. He was held immediately responsible for the safety of that city, and any failure in attaining that most important object was sure to meet with prompt official and public censure. No one of the many officers who had up to this time held the command had escaped disaster, and all had failed in defending the positions they held or in preventing the approach of the enemy to the capital whenever the Confederates saw fit to make an advance in that direction.

At the time of the general movement of the Union armies, in May, 1864, General Sigel had attempted to march southwardly through the valley of the Shenandoah, but, meeting the enemy at Newmarket, was defeated and forced to fall back to Cedar Creek. He was succeeded in command by General Hunter, who with a considerable force penetrated as far as Lynchburg—an expedition with which, it will be remembered, General Sheridan was expected to co-operate in the movement he made to Trevilian Station shortly after the battle of Cold Harbor. At Lynchburg the enemy was found in strong force, the Second Corps of Lee's army, under

Early, having been sent to re-enforce the troops holding that position, and Hunter was compelled to retreat—a movement he effected by directing his course to the northwest and falling back to the Ohio River through the Kanawha Valley, leaving the direct road to Washington and the North open and undefended.

This opportunity was at once seized by the vigilant leaders, who so often had seen offensive operations of our armies checked by a bold attack upon the national capital, or upon Northern territory, and General Early was at once directed to move into Maryland, and from thence to demonstrate against Washington. Without giving in detail his movements, it is sufficient to say that he advanced into Maryland, easily defeating such troops as attempted to impede his movements, and after threatening an attack on Baltimore and defeating General Wallace at Monocacy, who fell back with his routed troops on Baltimore, Early turned the head of his column toward Washington, and at noon of July 11th attacked the fortifications protecting the northerly side of the city. The only troops that at first were available to meet this assault were a motley collection of heavy artillery, convalescents, invalids, sailors and marines from the navy yard, dismounted cavalry, militia, quartermasters' clerks, and other Government employees, hastily collected and equipped, and, without training or organization, thrown into the works to make the best defense they could.

Fortunately, however, at the critical moment, when Early was ready to advance his lines, two divisions of the Sixth Corps and a brigade of the Nineteenth, which had been dispatched from the Army of

the Potomac upon the receipt of the news of Wallace's defeat, arrived upon the field. The arrival of this re-enforcement of veterans checked the desire of the enemy to attack, and on the following day, after a short but severe engagement, Early withdrew from Washington and, marching westwardly, fell back on the line of the Potomac.

From this time on Washington itself was in no immediate danger; but Early, with his troops, continued to remain in its vicinity, easily evading the futile efforts that were made to pursue or bring him to an engagement, and with his cavalry plundering the towns and farms of Maryland and southern Pennsylvania.

The then existing condition of military affairs is well described in a telegram of Charles A. Dana, Assistant Secretary of War, addressed to General Grant on July 12th: "Nothing can possibly be done here toward pursuing or cutting off the enemy for want of a commander. Augur commands the defenses of Washington, with McCook and a lot of brigadiers under him, but he is not allowed to go outside. Wright commands his own corps; Gillmore has been assigned to the temporary command of those troops of the Nineteenth Corps in the city of Washington; Ord, to command the Eighth Corps and all other troops in the Middle Department, leaving Wallace to command the city of Baltimore alone; but there is no head to the whole, and it seems indispensable that you should at once appoint one. . . . General Halleck will not give orders, except as he receives them; the President will give none; and until you direct positively and explicitly what is to be done everything will go on in the deplorable





and fatal way in which it has gone for the past week."

That the military system then existing in and about Washington fully justified the strong expressions used in this dispatch may readily appear when within fifty miles of that city could be found four independent military departments, dependent for instruction, orders, and control upon the constituted military authorities that were assembled at and around the War Department.

The Department of West Virginia included that State, the Shenandoah Valley, and western Maryland; the Department of the Susquehanna consisted of the State of Pennsylvania and three counties of Ohio; the Department of Washington comprised the District of Columbia and portions of Maryland and Virginia; and the so-called Middle Department was formed from Delaware and a part of Maryland.

The troops in these commands were generally recruits, recently organized regiments, or such as were thought to be of the least value to the armies engaged in active service, and many of the officers in the higher commands were those whom it had been found inexpedient to employ in actual hostile operations, and who yet had claims upon the Administration sufficient to prevent their entire retirement from the service. The army commanded by General Hunter was the only force that could be considered a valuable military factor in these four departments, and at the moment of Early's first movement upon the capital these troops, suffering from the losses of the Lynchburg campaign, were slowly making their way eastwardly along the Ohio River to the field of operations.



The information that General Grant possessed of this condition of affairs, and the unsatisfactory results of the operations conducted by these various commands against Early after his repulse from the capital, convinced him that the four departments must be merged into one, and that one commander should control all troops opposing any movement of the enemy toward Maryland or Pennsylvania.

He first suggested Major-General Franklin as his choice for this command, and this selection not meeting the approval of the President, he then named General Meade, in whom, from association in the Army of the Potomac, he had great confidence. This proposal met with no greater favor than the first, probably from the fact that it was not deemed expedient or proper to remove General Meade from the army he had so long commanded, and with which his active military career had been identified, to another command which gave no promise of a greater field of usefulness.

In these suggestions the days passed until the unfortunate result of the explosion of the Petersburg mine showed that a long siege would be required to gain possession of that town, and that a large force of cavalry was not required at that time.

On the 31st of July General Grant sent for General Sheridan and told him that he had been selected to command the troops that were to operate against Early, and that he should proceed immediately to his new field of duty. While General Grant had determined to thus confide the future operations intended to protect Washington and ultimately defeat the force under Early's command, he found that the Administration was still reluctant to reconstruct or consoli-



date the different departments, and apparently unwilling to take any active steps toward relieving General Hunter from the nominal command he held.

This difficulty was at the time avoided by the assignment of General Sheridan to the command of all troops that were to be actively employed in the field, and he was informed that, in addition to the troops properly belonging in his new sphere of duty, he would have under his orders the Sixth Corps, then temporarily serving in the defense of Washington, the Nineteenth Corps, which was being transported from New Orleans to Washington, and a division of the cavalry corps of the Army of the Potomac, that should at once be sent to report to him.

On the 1st of August General Sheridan received his orders, but so little was anticipated of the work that he was to undertake, the magnitude of the task before him, and the time required to accomplish the intended operations, that Sheridan was only temporarily relieved from immediate duty with the Army of the Potomac, but not from command of the cavalry as a corps organization.

On the 4th of August General Sheridan reached Washington, and on the following day was instructed by General Halleck to report to General Grant, who was then at Monocacy Junction, having gone directly there to give personal supervision to the preparations for movement of the troops, being urged to take that step by a dispatch from the President, who expressed his disgust with the helplessness and disorder prevailing along the upper Potomac, and his belief that nothing would be done, or attempted, unless forced by the general in person.

Before leaving Washington, in company with the

Secretary of War, General Sheridan called upon the President, whom he now met for the second time, and during the conversation that followed the meeting Mr. Lincoln informed the general that the secretary had objected to his assignment to Hunter's command, as he was thought to be too young; that he himself had agreed with him, but had finally concluded to assent to the views of General Grant and "hope for the best."

In his autobiography General Sheridan speaks of this interview and observes: "Mr. Stanton remained silent during these remarks, never once indicating whether he too had become reconciled to my selection or not; and although after we left the White House he conversed with me freely in regard to the campaign I was expected to make, seeking to impress on me the necessity for success, from the political as well as from the military point of view, yet he utterly ignored the fact that he had taken any part in disapproving the recommendation of the general in chief."

On the 6th of August Sheridan reported to General Grant at Monocacy, and there learned that General Hunter had that day asked to be wholly relieved from duty; not that he found fault with the assignment of Sheridan to the control of the active forces of the command, but because he believed that his fitness for the position he was filling was distrusted by General Halleck, and that his continuance in nominal command would be an embarrassment to the officer charged with active operations by removing him one degree from immediate communication with the headquarters of the army. On the following day Hunter's request was granted and an

order was issued by the President consolidating the Middle Department, the Department of Washington, the Department of the Susquehanna, and the Department of West Virginia into one homogeneous command, which was designated as the Middle Military Division, and to the command of this General Sheridan was temporarily assigned.

In pursuance of orders previously given, General Hunter had already directed the concentration of all his troops available for field service on the south side of the Potomac River at Halltown, some four miles in front of Harper's Ferry, and all, with the exception of Averill's cavalry, then engaged in pursuit of a raiding party of the enemy, were on the 6th of August moving to their designated station.

This movement of our troops was an indication to the enemy that offensive movements were at last to be begun in earnest, and he at once prepared to meet them by calling in his scattered detachments and concentrating his army in our front in the vicinity of Martinsburg, occupying positions from which he could continue to obstruct the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, and yet secure a retreat up the Shenandoah Valley at any time found necessary. From the day these dispositions were commenced no organized body of Confederate troops crossed to the north bank of the Potomac or stood upon the territory of the loyal States, with the exception of a few small raiding parties.

The instructions that had been prepared for Hunter were turned over to Sheridan for his guidance, and, apart from details unnecessary to be given, contained the following paragraph, which indicated the manner in which operations in the Shen-

andoah Valley were thereafter to be conducted, and which produced important results :

“ . . . In pushing up the Shenandoah Valley, as it is expected you will have to go there first or last, it is desirable that nothing should be left to invite the enemy to return. Take all provisions, forage, and stock wanted for the use of your command. Such as can not be consumed destroy. It is not desirable that the buildings should be destroyed—they should rather be protected; but the people should be informed that so long as an army can subsist among them recurrences of these raids must be expected, and we are determined to put a stop to them at all hazards. Bear in mind the object is to drive the enemy south, and to do this you want to keep him always in sight. Be guided in your course by the course he takes. . . .

U. S. GRANT, *Lieutenant General.*”

The value of these instructions, and the necessity for strictly conforming to them, are apparent when the character and resources of the Shenandoah Valley are examined. At the time of these operations, and for many years previously, it had been the richest, the most fertile, and the most highly cultivated agricultural section of Virginia. Unlike the eastern parts of the State, the lands had not been exhausted by the excessive cultivation of tobacco and the unthrifty and wasteful system of slave labor upon large plantations, but, in the methods of cultivation and the uses to which they were devoted, resembled the thriving farming regions of the more northern States. The lands lay high above sea level, and en-

joyed a cool and temperate climate; the soil was generally underlaid with limestone, and was abundantly watered by the Shenandoah River, its branches and affluents, and the whole country was adapted to the raising of grain and the rearing of live stock, which was everywhere found in abundance.

At all times the Confederate armies which had advanced or retreated through this region had been abundantly supplied, and had been able to collect large quantities of stores and animals to supply the inhabitants and the troops in other less fertile portions of their territory; and to prevent further incursions to the north of the character of those which had hitherto so seriously threatened the safety of the capital and interfered with active operations elsewhere, it was most important that this granary and constant source of supply to the enemy should no longer exist.

While his troops were being massed at Halltown General Sheridan applied himself diligently to the study of the geography and the topographical features of the country in which his future movements were to be made, information of the utmost importance to him as he was now to depend entirely upon his own resources, and, having an independent command, the entire responsibility for the conduct of the campaign rested upon him alone. He was fortunate in having upon his staff an officer of engineers, Lieutenant John R. Meigs, whose skill and ability he has highly commended. This officer for a year past had served in the valley, and was familiar with every road and stream as well as with the different positions suitable for attack and defense, either by the Northern or Southern armies.



The valley of the Shenandoah, in which the operations of the campaign to be described were conducted, extends from the Potomac River, the northern boundary, to Staunton, distant southwesterly about one hundred and fifteen miles. On the east it is bounded by the Blue Ridge Mountains and on the west by the eastern slope of the Alleghanies, there called North Mountains, the country between these two ranges being generally open and undulating, with occasional bodies of heavy timber, none of any great extent. At the upper end this valley is some forty miles wide, while at Strasburg, about fifty miles south of the Potomac, the extreme width is but twenty-five. Southeast of this town and in the middle of the valley is found an abrupt range of mountains, called Massanutten, extending southerly between the north and south forks of the Shenandoah River, and extending some forty miles to Harrisonburg, where these hills again merge into the plain. The two beautiful valleys formed by this range, with the eastern and western boundaries of the main valley, are respectively called—that on the east the Luray, while that on the west retains the name of Shenandoah.

A broad macadamized road runs southerly through the whole extent of the valley from Williamsport to Staunton, and beyond and along this road are found the principal towns and villages of the region, with lateral roads extending east and west to the mountain boundaries. The roads extending toward the Blue Ridge are generally macadamized, and the principal ones connect through various gaps with the railroads of eastern Virginia.

These gaps are low and wide and can be readily

passed by troops marching from the east, and a Union army operating in the valley was always exposed to flank attacks from the Confederates, who could readily be brought by rail to Gordonsville or Charlottesville, from which points they could rapidly move to such positions as were found most desirable, and movements of this character had frequently in the past resulted in great injury and loss to our troops acting in the valley.

The surface of the valley, between the ranges by which it was bounded, was well adapted for the movement and manœuvring of troops. The country was open and generally unobstructed by hills or steep declivities, the streams were small and easily forded, and it was possible to handle large bodies of troops in such a manner that their operations were conducted immediately under the eye of their commander. The wide and level fields were well suited for the employment of cavalry, and the opportunity afforded by this favorable ground of making use of his large force of disciplined cavalry proved of great value to General Sheridan in the engagements that followed. In contrast to the system of fighting dismounted that the swamps, thickets, and heavily wooded country of eastern Virginia often imposed upon our mounted troops, here the cavalry could be put to its proper use, and, mounted, could be moved at speed and at all times thrown upon an enemy with force and effect, as favorable opportunity or necessity might require.

The forces under the command of General Sheridan with which he began his operations in the valley, and which during the campaign and since has been designated and known as the Army of the Shenan-



doah, consisted of the Sixth Corps of the Army of the Potomac, under Major-General H. G. Wright; one division of the Nineteenth Corps, under Major-General W. H. Emory; two small divisions of the Army of West Virginia, commanded by Major-General George Crook; the First Cavalry Division of the Army of the Potomac, Brigadier-General W. Merritt in command; and a division of cavalry of the Army of West Virginia, commanded by Brigadier-General W. W. Averill. Brigadier-General A. T. Torbert had been appointed chief of cavalry, and had command of the entire force of that arm. To this force were subsequently added the Third Cavalry Division of the Army of the Potomac, under Brigadier-General James H. Wilson, which joined the army on August 17th, and a second division of the Nineteenth Army Corps, commanded by Brigadier-General Cuvier Grover, reporting at the same time.

The Confederate forces at the opening of the campaign were General Early's three divisions, among whom were to be found many of the troops who, under "Stonewall" Jackson, had in previous years been successful in expeditions through the valley, an infantry corps under General Breckinridge, and a division of cavalry commanded by General Lomax. This force was from time to time re-enforced, and these additions to the Confederate strength will be referred to in course as they occurred. At this date the Confederates under Early numbered about twenty thousand effective men for field service, and that commanded by Sheridan when his troops were finally collected contained about twenty-six thousand effectives, this number being in the course of the campaign largely reduced by the cas-

ualties incident to active service in the field and losses sustained in battle, as no re-enforcements or additional troops were at any time received during the campaign. The whole force within the limits of the military division was nominally much greater, but the necessities of providing garrisons for the many cities and important strategic points that had to be protected, the strong detachments required to guard and keep open the Baltimore and Ohio and other railroads, and the large escorts needed to protect the supply trains in passing through a hostile country, absorbed so many men that no greater force than that given could be collected for active and offensive movements.

In addition to the advantage possessed by the Confederate commander of operating in a friendly country where he could at any point be abundantly supplied, and where he had nothing to apprehend from raids upon his trains or bases of supply, he was well served by the guerrilla bands of Mosby, Gilmore, and other partisan leaders, nearly all of whom were natives of the valley and familiar with every road and defensible position within its limits. These men generally lived at their houses, often within our lines, and, except on such occasions as they were absent on plundering expeditions, pretended to be and were often mistaken for honest citizens. It was difficult to make any movement of the Union troops that could escape the observation of the hundreds of these spies; every unprotected wagon was plundered and all stragglers or small detached parties were in hourly danger, and were in most cases killed or captured by these guerrillas. However, as the campaign progressed means were adopted to remedy

these evils, and before it closed these bands had been swept out of existence.

On the morning of the 10th of August General Sheridan moved his columns southwardly, the enemy falling back as he advanced, and only opposing him by outposts and cavalry, creating the impression that he was intending to occupy some defensible position or expecting to meet re-enforcements that would allow him to take the offensive. These movements continued until the 13th, when a reconnoissance developed that Early with his infantry had taken position at Fisher's Hill, a short distance south of Strasburg, and there, having a strong position protected by earthworks, extending across the narrow valley between the Massanutten and North Mountains, appeared to invite an attack, his cavalry being so dispersed as to act on the flank of any attacking force. Information had been received that a Confederate column was advancing to Early's assistance from Culpeper Court House by the road leading through Chester Gap and Front Royal—a movement that would seriously threaten the left flank and rear of our army, which, as General Wilson's division of cavalry and the Second Division of the Ninth Corps had not yet joined, would be largely outnumbered.

This intelligence was confirmed by a dispatch from General Grant received on the 14th, stating that re-enforcements had been sent by Lee to Early, and, as the event proved, General Anderson, in command of a division of infantry, a battalion of artillery, and Fitzhugh Lee's division of cavalry, was then moving rapidly to effect a junction with Early. The orders of General Grant instructed Sheridan to

act with extreme caution and on the defensive in the presence of forces now outnumbering his own until future movements would strengthen him or weaken the enemy.

After examining carefully the situation, General Sheridan concluded that the best, and indeed only, really defensible position in the valley that would be secure from flanking operations of the enemy was at Halltown, whence he had lately advanced, as at any more southerly position his left and rear were constantly exposed to attacks through the numerous gaps that intersect the Blue Ridge. Another advantage of this movement to the rear would be the more speedy junction with the Third Cavalry Division and the Division of the Nineteenth Corps that were now on the march from Washington to the valley.

On the 15th and 16th the movement to the rear was commenced, and the infantry columns, unmolested, fell back to Winchester, and thence to Clifton, still farther to the north. General Merritt, with his cavalry, had previously been sent to Front Royal and Chester Gap to observe and obstruct as far as possible Anderson's column. On the afternoon of the 16th Merritt met the enemy near Front Royal and handsomely repulsed an attack made upon his front by a division of infantry and two brigades of cavalry, capturing from the enemy two battle flags and three hundred prisoners.

While this movement in retreat was in progress General Torbert, in command of the cavalry, was instructed to carry out the orders of General Grant, under date of August 5th, to destroy or remove all subsistence stores and animals that were found in the valley south of Winchester. The object of this



was not only to provide subsistence for our troops—which had hitherto and in all future movements in the valley were, as far as possible, provided for from the resources of the country—but to deprive the Confederates of supplies that until this time largely supported their armies in Virginia. The houses, and the families that occupied them, were not molested, but the loss of supplies and the general flight to the North of all negroes engaged on the farms and in domestic service that were encountered by our troops, prevented thereafter any material additions from that region to the strength of the Confederate army.

The necessity of providing by their own labor for the support of their families kept at home many who would otherwise have filled Lee's ranks, and did much to bring back those who were in service and to restrain the activities of the guerrillas who, deprived of horses and compelled to work for daily bread, had little time or inclination to indulge in their former predatory exploits. This policy once begun was continued throughout the whole campaign, and the consequences of war were at last realized by a people who before had known little of its horrors.

From Winchester the army continued to fall back, meeting successively the expected cavalry and the Nineteenth Corps, and with but slight interference from the enemy, and by the 22d was established in and about Halltown in a secure and defensible position.

On the 25th the cavalry, which was moving on the right of our army, encountered Breckinridge's corps marching north toward Shepherdstown, on the bank of the Potomac, and drove it back some dis-

tance, until re-enforced by three divisions of infantry, when our troops were in turn compelled to retreat. The large Confederate force engaged and the direction and persistency of the movement indicated an intention on Early's part to cross the Potomac into Maryland; but if such were the case our prompt dispositions caused him to abandon the enterprise, and on the following day he fell back to Bunker Hill, on the west side of the Opequan Creek. During the next two or three days constant skirmishing occurred, and our lines were advanced to a position between Clifton and Berryville.

On the 3d of September the left of our line at Berryville was heavily attacked, and at first the impression prevailed that Early was about to hazard a general engagement, but it finally appeared that the attack was made by Anderson's troops. As was subsequently learned, General Lee had become so disturbed by the aggressive operations of our army in front of Petersburg that he had sent orders for the immediate return of Anderson and his force to that point. On the march from Winchester toward Ashby's Gap, by which he expected to cross the Blue Ridge, Anderson fell in with the left of Sheridan's army, which had just taken position at Berryville. A short conflict followed, in which the Confederates were driven back toward Winchester. General Early during the night moved to Anderson's assistance, but, finding that the Union troops had taken a new and strong position, he determined that Anderson must, for the present at least, postpone his intended march to Petersburg, and withdraw his whole army to Winchester and vicinity.

Succeeding this repulse of Anderson some minor

operations of the cavalry and skirmishes of infantry outposts occurred, with the general result favorable to the Union troops; but no engagement of importance occurred before the 19th of September, though the men were actively employed in scouting and guarding the lines, during which some changes in position were made.

While the army was falling back from Strasburg to Halltown, and during the period of comparative inactivity that followed that movement, General Sheridan became the object of considerable criticism from the Northern press, which had been much excited by the former bold efforts of the Confederates to attack the capital. It was not, of course, known that for the time being the enemy was his superior in force, and that he acted under the direct instructions of the general in chief of the Army. In addition to this, if further reasons for his conduct were required, he was in receipt almost daily from the authorities at Washington of orders to use the greatest caution, and in no possible manner to incur the risk of any, even the slightest, disaster to his troops. The approaching presidential election and the effect that the defeat of an army charged with the duty of protecting the capital might have upon the popular mind were considered of such high importance that even mistakes committed in the interest of safety were preferable to incurring the least risk of misfortune. While not acting aggressively, Sheridan watched every movement of his enemy, and was prepared to take advantage of any opening he might afford for an attack, and one of his hopes was that Early would again move north and cross the Potomac, in which event



his destruction was considered inevitable. As General Sheridan at the time informed General Grant, he had purposely left everything in that direction open to the enemy, but, as has been seen, Early, after demonstrating in that direction, finally fell back to the lines about Winchester. During the movements that have been described since the time he took command of the Army of the Shenandoah, General Sheridan had been embarrassed and disappointed by the unsatisfactory, and often contradictory, intelligence of the enemy's movements, position, and strength that he had received from the scouts and other parties employed for this purpose. These men as he found them were seldom reliable, being either Confederate deserters or Southern citizens of such character as rendered them ineligible for service even in the Confederate army, and all willing to tell any story that they imagined would please their employer or procure a reward, and their occupation, of necessity, gave them such information of important facts in relation to our troops that, if so disposed, they could do great injury to the cause they assumed to serve. He finally concluded that the best service of this nature could be obtained from men in our own ranks who would volunteer for such duty, and decided that a battalion should be raised for this purpose, the organization and command of which were intrusted to Major H. K. Young, of the First Rhode Island Infantry. The men were furnished with Confederate uniforms for use when needed, and were well paid from secret-service funds in proportion to the value of the information they furnished. A body of men to whom the excitement and adventure of such duty were a welcome relief from the

ordinary routine of service in the ranks was soon collected, all of whom were distinguished for capacity and fitness for the work they undertook. For the remainder of the war they served with Sheridan's headquarters, and he and all the officers who had occasion for their service spoke in the highest terms of their value. It is worthy of note that not one of these men was ever found unfaithful to the trust reposed in him, and also remarkable that, notwithstanding the hazardous nature of their duties, mortality among them was much less than among those employed in any other branch of the service.

While the army was inactive every preparation was made to fit it for immediate work and to collect all information concerning the movements of the enemy. Early in September rumors (many coming from Washington) were circulated that large detachments had been made from the Confederate army in the valley, and now a pressure was brought upon General Sheridan to induce an immediate advance. This he resisted, as he had other efforts to control his action, and would take no step until he felt fully justified in his own mind as to the proper course to be pursued.

On the 16th of September he received from a reliable source information that the infantry and artillery that Anderson had brought in August to Early's aid had been recalled and was on the march to Petersburg through Chester Gap; he at once determined to attack the enemy as soon as these troops had got sufficiently distant from the main body to prevent their being recalled in time to take part in the intended battle. Before he could give the orders for movement of his troops he was called to Charles-

town to meet General Grant, who had arrived there from the lines before Petersburg for the purpose of consulting as to future operations of this army.

Sheridan explained to his chief the existing situation, and presented and developed his plans with so much intelligence and confidence that Grant promptly adopted his views and authorized him at once to resume the offensive and attack Early at the earliest favorable moment, conducting the operations in the manner he had already determined.

General Grant refers to this interview in his *Memoirs*, and on this subject remarks: "Before starting I had drawn up a plan of campaign for Sheridan which I had brought with me, but, seeing that he was so clear and so positive in his views and so confident of success, I said nothing about this, and did not take it out of my pocket." Thus supported by his superior and confident in himself and the troops he commanded, General Sheridan returned to his army and at once prepared to attack his opponent with every prospect of success.

The plan of attack that General Sheridan had formed, and which on the 17th he communicated to General Grant, involved a march to the south of Winchester, about which town the bulk of the enemy's force was then stationed, after crossing the Opequan Creek and passing through the village of Newtown, turning to the left and attacking in such a direction that a defeat would compel the enemy to retreat to the north, or to cross the North Mountains, either of which movements would deprive him of his only sources of supply or re-enforcement, and cut him off from his only true line of retreat toward the south.

Circumstances, however, changed this plan, for

Early, it was found, had detached on the 17th two of his infantry divisions and one division of cavalry in the direction of Martinsburg, with the intention of breaking up and driving off working parties that were engaged in repairing the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. These troops were met by and skirmished with Averill's cavalry, and the news of this movement was at once sent to Sheridan, who immediately changed his plans and resolved to attack directly on the troops in front of Winchester, trusting to defeat the force remaining at that point before the two Confederate divisions that had been detached could return to the main army, and thus overpower the several bodies of the enemy in detail.

However, while dispositions were being made for this movement General Early, who was at Martinsburg, learned, on the morning of the 18th, of the meeting that had taken place on the preceding day between the Union generals, and, rightly judging that it was held for the object of arranging for immediate active movements, at once ordered his detached troops back to Winchester, and after a forced march got them within supporting distance of the main body of his army.

The lines of the Confederate army as it was finally posted to meet the expected attack extended from the right, which lay on the Berryville pike, two miles east of Winchester, northwardly toward Stephenson's Depot, at which point the two divisions which had been detached were posted on the night of the 18th. One division of cavalry was on the right and rear of the Confederate infantry on the Berryville pike, and the other protected the left of the line near Stephenson's Depot.

The plan which General Sheridan had now formed consisted in a strong and vigorous attack upon the right of the enemy on the Berryville pike, in the hope of crushing that force before the Confederate army could be concentrated in sufficient strength to offer a strong defense, and, successful in this, to gradually extend his force to the right and rear of the enemy and cut him off from a retreat to the south, while, moving in any other direction, he would be exposed to attack by the strong cavalry force that was posted on the right of our army.

By three o'clock on the morning of September 19th our troops were in motion and proceeded in the following order: On the extreme left General Wilson with his division of cavalry had the advance, and was followed by the Sixth and Nineteenth Corps. His orders were to move up the Berryville pike, carry the crossing of the Opequan on that road, charge through the gorge on the road west of the stream, and occupy the open ground at the head of this defile. The two infantry corps were expected to follow closely and to occupy the open ground which Wilson was ordered to seize, and, this being accomplished, Wilson was directed to move to the left and front to protect that flank of the army and to intercept any movement of the enemy to the southward. The two divisions of the Eighth Corps under General Crook, which on the night of the 18th had encamped to the northward at Summit Point, were directed to follow the Sixth and Nineteenth Corps across the Opequan, and it was intended to hold them in reserve until the time for their service should arrive, and then, moving them to the south and west, they were to be used as a turning column, with the assistance of the cavalry



under Wilson, to prevent the retreat of the enemy southward from Winchester. On the right General Torbert, with Merritt's division of cavalry, was to advance westwardly from Summit Point to Stephenson's Depot, and there, uniting his command with General Averill's division, moving on that point from the north, to attack vigorously on the left of the enemy and drive any opposing force he might meet toward Winchester.

On the left of our army the cavalry at dawn forced the crossing of the Opequan, and, pressing rapidly forward through the Berryville gorge, captured a small earthwork in front of the enemy's main line, making prisoners of the garrison. The position thus taken was held by the cavalry, who repulsed several attacks of the enemy's infantry, and was finally turned over to the Sixth Corps, which, preceded by General Sheridan, began to arrive on the ground at 8 A. M. and was deployed into line of battle under a heavy artillery fire from the enemy as the divisions successively arrived on the ground, while the cavalry marched to the left and cleared the ground for further movements. The Nineteenth Corps followed as closely as possible, but the delays inseparable from marching a long column consisting of two corps of infantry upon a single narrow road, fording a stream, and the obstructions to the march caused by the ammunition trains and artillery, had consumed much time, and it was nearly noon before the Nineteenth Corps was upon the ground and formed, upon the right of the Sixth. The position occupied by our troops was east of Winchester and about two miles from the outskirts of the town. The ground on which the Union forces were formed was open, and



neither army was protected in any degree by earth-works, but the Confederate lines were formed in a belt of timber and partially concealed from view.

At the time when General Sheridan, at the head of his column, first arrived upon the field, but one division of Confederate infantry was in position to oppose his advance, supported on the right by a division of cavalry, but the slow movement of our infantry gave the Confederate commander an equal opportunity of concentrating his force, and by the time our troops were formed for the attack they were confronted by the bulk of the Confederate infantry, which, marching on interior lines, was more rapidly brought to the threatened point.

At noon the Sixth and Nineteenth Corps were in line and ready to attack, with the cavalry division on the left and Crook's troops, which had begun to reach the field, massing in the rear, and a general advance was ordered. A severe engagement at once began, and continued throughout the day. On the extreme left the cavalry encountered that of the enemy, and after a sharp and spirited engagement drove it back toward Winchester. The two divisions of the Sixth Corps, engaged on the left, after a severe struggle forced back the infantry in their front, and the division of the Nineteenth Corps, on their right, attacked and drove in confusion the troops it encountered, which formed the left of the Confederate infantry line. This division, however, advancing too rapidly in pursuit of the retreating enemy, became exposed to a heavy fire from Early's reserve artillery, and their movement separated them from the right of the Sixth Corps. In the interval thus caused two of the enemy's divisions were placed and a portion

of the right division of the Sixth Corps and the hitherto successful division of the Nineteenth were driven back, while the advance of other portions of the line was temporarily checked.

General Sheridan, who personally directed the operations on this line, at once ordered Russell's division of the Sixth Corps, which had been held in reserve, to move to the front and, occupying the gap caused in the lines by the Confederate charge, to advance and attack the enemy. This movement, which struck the advancing enemy in the flank, supported by the fire of a battery, soon turned the tide and drove the Confederates back to their original ground, and the right of our line was again re-established and in a position in advance of that occupied earlier in the day. Behind the successful division which now retained a position in the front line the troops that had been broken were rallied and reformed, and the Second Division of the Nineteenth Corps was brought to the front and replaced that which had been driven back.

The charge of Russell's division restored the integrity of the Union lines and caused severe loss to the enemy; but this success was gained at a heavy cost in killed and wounded, among the former of whom was the gallant leader, who at the moment of victory fell, shot through the heart—a death that, as Sheridan has well said, “brought sadness to every heart in the army.”

It was now long past midday, and as yet no intelligence had been received from General Torbert's column of cavalry that had been ordered to attack on the enemy's extreme right at Stephenson's Depot. The strength that the enemy had developed showed

that a strong effort would be required to drive him from the position he held, and General Sheridan reluctantly abandoned his original intention of using the command of General Crook to operate on the left of the enemy and cut off his retreat to the south, and ordered these two divisions to the front and placed them on the right of his line as formed, with directions to move forward at once.

This new line of fresh troops outflanked the Confederate right, and, wheeling to the left as they advanced, drove everything before them in confusion. After directing the movements of General Crook's troops, General Sheridan rode back to the left and ordered an advance of the Sixth and Nineteenth Corps, which was made with equal success, and the whole force of the enemy was soon in full retreat.

While Crook's troops were advancing to the charge Torbert arrived on the right with his two divisions of cavalry, driving before him two brigades of infantry and a division of cavalry that during the day had been vainly striving to impede his advance from Stephenson's Depot. Reaching the extreme right of the Confederate lines at the moment of the general advance of the Union army, these troops, with the assistance of infantry from Breckinridge's corps, made one last rally; but the ground was favorable for a cavalry charge, and our mounted troops swept down upon them with irresistible force, capturing five guns and twelve hundred prisoners, and utterly destroying the remainder as an organized body.

The movements of the infantry were equally successful along the whole front, and the enemy was rapidly driven back to Winchester. The routed Con-

federates attempted to rally behind some earthworks that had been constructed around the turn in the early days of the war, but, attacked in front by our infantry, now exulting in their success, and threatened on their right by the victorious cavalry, their resistance was but momentary; they soon broke from their ranks, and disorganized and scattered fugitives fled through Winchester and down the roads that led southerly from the town. Unfortunately, the first division of Confederate infantry that left the field retired in good order, and with sufficient strength to prevent the cavalry on the left of our army from gaining the turnpike leading south, thus giving a free road to the beaten enemy. General Sheridan, with Crook's troops, continued in pursuit for about three miles, but night and the exhausted condition of the men, who had been continuously marching and fighting for more than eighteen hours, compelled a halt.

The news of this great success—which was announced to the general in chief by a brief dispatch which told the story in saying, "We have just sent them whirling through Winchester, and we are after them to-morrow; this army behaved splendidly"—was flashed, with all the speed that electricity could give, throughout the North and to the other armies in the field; and at this day it is hardly possible to conceive the effect produced on public opinion and the feeling of confidence and hope for the future that was aroused.

Though the battle was not to be regarded as one of the first importance—so far as the number of troops engaged or the immediate results of the action were considered—it was a signal and first suc-

cess, obtained in a field where our troops had hitherto been always, and often ignominiously, defeated, and it was one of the very few victories gained by a Northern army in the long course of the war in which the enemy's forces had been entirely broken up and in the course of the engagement driven in disorderly rout from the field.

Our losses were heavy, as the fighting was hard and continuous through the day, showing a total of over forty-five hundred, among whom were many officers of rank and distinction. The Confederates sustained losses equal to those we suffered, and, as substantial evidence of victory, left in our hands five guns, nine battle flags, and two thousand prisoners.

Congratulations from every quarter were received by General Sheridan, among the first being one from the President, who, on the day following the battle, at the suggestion of General Grant, gave him the appointment of brigadier general in the regular army, converting his temporary assignment to command the Middle Military Division into a permanent appointment; and there is no record that he or any other officer of the Administration on this occasion raised any question of the extreme youthfulness of the recipient of these high honors.

This battle of the Opequan—for so it was designated by General Sheridan to distinguish it from actions that had previously occurred in the neighborhood of Winchester—had results of far higher importance than the defeat and rout of a hostile army. It restored the whole of the valley north of Winchester to the control of the Union, from which it was never again separated; the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad and the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal



were once more opened, and thereafter kept in use for the benefit of the loyal States; Maryland and Pennsylvania were from that time freed from any further apprehension of the invasions to which for three years they had been subjected; and the safety of the national capital was permanently assured.

At the time it occurred a victory of this striking character was of great value to inspirit those who at the North were watching the progress of the war and patiently and, as it were sometimes, almost hopelessly looking for its successful close. During the whole of the past year the two great armies of the East and the West had been slowly and painfully pressing forward on their appointed paths. No signal victories, brilliant trophies, or rapid conquests of territory had rewarded their efforts; but at vast cost of life and treasure they had daily gained, after bitter struggles, some steps forward, but ever found their advance disputed by a vigorous, active, unconquered, and seemingly indomitable foe. Like a rainbow of promise this signal success suddenly beamed upon a people who by long disappointment had almost ceased to hope for victory, and furnished a substantial ground for bright anticipations of the future.

So far as known, but one person within the limits of our country has injuriously criticised or censured the manner in which the battle of the Opequan was fought, or the results of that victory. Singularly enough, that critic is found in the person of General Early, who some years after the close of the war, in one of the many articles which he was in the habit of furnishing to Southern papers and magazines illustrative of his own prowess and of the errors, mistakes, and weaknesses of Northern gen-



erals, bitterly complains that General Sheridan did not sufficiently defeat him at the battle of the Opequan, and that to that officer's incapacity he owes his escape from total destruction. He asserts that "instead of being promoted, Sheridan ought to have been cashiered for this battle"; and that "a skillful and energetic commander of the enemy's forces would have crushed Ramseur before any assistance could have reached him, and thus insured the destruction of my whole force; and later in the day, when the battle had turned against us, with the minimum superiority in cavalry which Sheridan had and the advantage of the open country, would have destroyed my whole force and captured everything I had."

It is certainly a difficult matter to satisfy an antagonist so exacting as General Early, but on subsequent occasions General Sheridan exerted himself to remedy and correct any omissions in his duty that occurred at the Opequan, and we have no evidence to show that at the subsequent engagements of Fisher's Hill, Cedar Creek, and Waynesborough General Early had any occasion to complain of want of energy, skill, or thoroughness on the part of his adversary. The battle of the Opequan was emphatically General Sheridan's own battle, and his alone, and, being the first engagement in which he exercised an independent command, is particularly worthy of notice in examining his military career.

It appears, from his correspondence with General Grant, that, on a careful examination of the field of operations and full knowledge of the force of his enemy, he had fully determined that an engagement was inexpedient until such time as the army

opposed to him should be diminished in strength, and to this decision he adhered in spite of many efforts made by those in high authority to force him to immediate action. When the detachment from Early's force that he had anticipated was made he immediately, and without instructions, prepared to strike the blow he had meditated, and General Grant's action at the Charlestown interview was confined to a hearty approval of the plans of his subordinate. Nor were these plans, as those of many generals, fixed and incapable of variation to meet changing circumstances, for on the 18th of September alterations in the positions of Early's troops required their entire reconstruction and new movements, which were successfully carried out; and again on the day of battle, and at a critical moment, when for an instant the contest was uncertain, a new and further modification that affected the whole conduct of the engagement and the possible results of success was at once determined on, and executed with such rapidity and vigor as to contribute materially to the victory that was gained.

In addition to the planning and ordering of the movements of the engagement, General Sheridan, as was always his custom, was on the lines with and in the presence of his troops, supervising and at times taking personal charge of the movements that he ordered, and which resulted so happily. From that day no soldier could be found under his command who had not the most perfect confidence in the ability and fortune of his commander, and none who would not enthusiastically follow wherever he led, with the assured conviction that his efforts would be rewarded by success.

## CHAPTER IX.

### FISHER'S HILL.—WOODSTOCK RACES.—CEDAR CREEK.

ON the night of September 19th Sheridan was not content to rest after the victory he had gained, but, after sending intelligence of the result of the day's battle to General Grant, gave orders for immediate pursuit of the enemy, and at daylight on the morning of the 20th the whole army marched southwardly from Winchester along the valley pike, the Sixth Corps on the left, the Nineteenth on the right, and the Eighth bringing up the rear. The cavalry preceded the infantry, Averill's division moving on what was known as the back road to the right of the valley pike, Merritt on the pike, and Wilson's division bearing to the left on the road to Front Royal. The enemy, having marched in retreat throughout the night of the 19th, was not encountered until overtaken by the cavalry in the afternoon, when he was found posted at Fisher's Hill, about fifteen miles south of Winchester and two miles south of Strasburg, and occupying the position to which Early had retreated on General Sheridan's first advance in the month of August.

The position at Fisher's Hill was naturally strong, and was protected by earthworks that were now being strengthened to such an extent that a direct

assault upon them would certainly result in great loss of life if not in defeat. At this point the main valley, twenty miles wide a short distance farther north, is divided by the Massanutten range, and the width of the western division, in which Fisher's Hill is found, is barely four miles. This line was held by the Confederate infantry, which occupied commanding positions well protected by strong earthworks and apparently secure against a direct assault. The left of this line was covered by one division of cavalry dismounted, and the other cavalry division was sent to the right, across the Massanutten range, and posted at Milford, in the Luray Valley, to prevent a flank attack from that quarter.

After reconnoitering the position of the enemy and appreciating the danger of a direct attack upon his front, General Sheridan determined that the most feasible plan for driving the enemy from his position was to turn his left flank by a strong attacking column and then support this movement by a demonstration on the front. During the afternoon of the 20th the Sixth and Nineteenth Corps arrived at Cedar Creek, and, crossing that stream, occupied the heights in front of Strasburg and covered the road to Front Royal on the east; Merritt's division of cavalry was moved to the right, and with Averill's covered and held the back road near the North Mountain, and Crook's two divisions were held on the north bank of Cedar Creek. At nightfall, as this arrangement of the lines was completed, the Union pickets held the northern part of the town of Strasburg and the Confederate pickets the southern.

The movement and placing in position of the column intended to attack the left flank and rear of







the enemy, and which to effect this object must be stationed on the eastern face of the North Mountain, was a difficult task, and of course had to be effected in such a manner that the movement should be concealed from the other side. The enemy occupied a signal station on Three Top Mountain, from which all movements of our troops could be observed in daylight. Therefore, on the night of the 20th, General Crook's troops, that were intended to form the flanking force, were moved into some heavy timber on the north bank of Cedar Creek, and lay concealed there through the next day. During the 21st the Sixth and Nineteenth Corps were advanced, and, moving through Strasburg, compelled the enemy's skirmishers to fall back to the intrenched lines on Fisher's Hill. After some severe fighting two good positions for our artillery were captured and the lines of the Sixth and Nineteenth Corps established securely within seven hundred yards of the Confederate defenses.

On the night of the 21st Crook's troops were brought across Cedar Creek and were hidden in some heavy timber in rear of the Sixth Corps, and at daylight on the morning of the 22d, protected from observation by ravines and woods, he marched westwardly and gained a point protected from observation near the back road and the base of North Mountain. While this movement, which occupied the greater part of the day, was conducted with perfect silence, the attention of the enemy was diverted with demonstrations on his front, and the right of our line, which was to co-operate with Crook when his attack should be made, was advanced and strengthened, Averill's division of cavalry was moved

to the right of the infantry line, and General Early prepared for assault from this portion of our front, though with little hope of ultimate success, for he states that after seeing this advance "orders were given for my troops to retire after dark, as I knew my force was not strong enough to resist a determined attack."

The execution of these orders, most appropriate to the situation, was, however, anticipated by General Crook, who, late in the afternoon, having gained a position in rear of the enemy's left flank, faced his troops to the east, and just at sunset charged down upon the troops, exposed without protection to his assault. A feeble effort was made to resist his advance, but sufficient troops could not be obtained for the purpose, and our men swept along the line, driving everything before them in confusion.

As General Crook advanced he was joined at the proper time by the right of the Sixth Corps, which had been held in readiness to move at the proper moment, and as the troops advanced, the movement was successively taken up by the different divisions of our infantry that were in front of the Confederate lines, and between sunset and dark the whole of Early's army was driven in confusion from the strong position at Fisher's Hill and fled panic-stricken from the field, abandoning the artillery and other property in the works. All discipline and organization was lost, and the retreating mass was scattered over the fields and roads toward Woodstock, with our infantry in pursuit.

About five miles south of Fisher's Hill, on some high ground, a few of the enemy rallied, and with two pieces of artillery endeavored to check the pursuit,

but the troops were swept away and the guns captured. At this point the only available brigade of cavalry was sent to the front, and through the night the pursuit was continued to Woodstock, ten miles from Fisher's Hill, which our infantry reached at daylight of the 23d, when a necessary halt was made to allow for rest and food and to reorganize the troops, which had been thrown into some confusion by the rapid movements.

The success obtained was great, involving as it did the capture of a strongly fortified position and the total rout of the hostile army, but it did not produce all of the results that General Sheridan had hoped to accomplish. On the 21st General Torbert had been sent with Wilson's cavalry division and two brigades of Merritt's to the Luray Valley, with the expectation that he would drive the cavalry of the enemy that was posted at Milford and, moving south, cross the Massanutten Mountain near Newmarket and gain a position that would allow him to act in Early's rear. Had this work been accomplished as intended, it is probable that the greater part of Early's army would have been captured after the rout at Fisher's Hill, but Torbert, after an ineffectual effort to drive the enemy's cavalry from Milford, fell back, and on the 23d, while at Woodstock, General Sheridan, to his astonishment, learned that nothing had been done by this cavalry force. The orders to push on to Newmarket at any cost were reiterated, but it may be here said that the renewed movement was made too late; General Early had passed south and was perfectly safe from pursuit before our cavalry reached Newmarket.

Another misfortune occurred in the neglect of

General Averill to join in the pursuit of the enemy as he retreated from Fisher's Hill, as that officer, after the capture of the works, placed his division of cavalry in camp and left General Sheridan to follow the retreating army through the night with the infantry and one small cavalry brigade. On the following day Averill was sent forward to follow the enemy, but, in the opinion of Sheridan, he failed to display the energy and activity that were required and was on the same day relieved by Colonel William H. Powell from command.

While all the results expected from the victory at Fisher's Hill were not obtained, it was a most encouraging success for the Union army and a crushing defeat to the Confederate commander, who was for a time compelled to abandon the whole valley of the Shenandoah to his opponent, and was unable to rally his army or use it for any practical purpose until it had been re-equipped and largely re-enforced. The Union loss was slight, not exceeding some four hundred killed and wounded. No record exists of the losses sustained by the Confederates, but twelve hundred prisoners and twenty pieces of artillery were captured by our troops. The condition of Early's army after this his second defeat is described in a letter from that officer to General Lee written a few days after the event:

"The enemy's immense superiority in cavalry and the inefficiency of mine has been the cause of all my disasters. In the affair at Fisher's Hill the cavalry gave way, but it was flanked. This would have been remedied if the troops had remained steady, but a panic seized them at the idea of being flanked, and without being defeated they broke, many of them

fleeing shamefully. The artillery was not captured by the enemy, but abandoned by the infantry. My troops are very much shattered, the men much exhausted, and many of them without shoes."

The effect of this second decisive victory was most encouraging to the whole country, and the belief became general that it was not only possible for our armies to meet and successfully resist those of the South, but that from this time on it was in the power of the Union troops to inflict crushing defeats upon their adversaries and inflict blows and cause losses that were irreparable, and which, if continued, promised a speedy close of the war.

The failure of the cavalry to pursue or cut off the retreat of Early gave him time to collect some of his scattered forces, and he took position on the night of the 23d at Rood's Hill, some two miles south of Mount Jackson. As soon, however, as our troops appeared on the 24th the retreat was again commenced; the Confederates, without offering any resistance, kept in advance of our forces, and, passing through Newmarket in advance of Torbert's cavalry, which had not yet reached that point, left the valley pike and continued their flight on a road inclining to the Blue Ridge. The flight and pursuit were kept up until night, when it became necessary to give the troops some rest, and both armies encamped—the Confederates some five miles in front of our lines. Here Early collected all his cavalry and then fell back through Runn's Gap, in the Blue Ridge, to a point where he expected to meet supplies and reinforcements from Richmond.

The forces of the enemy had thus been entirely driven from the valley, which, in its whole extent,



was now in the possession of Northern troops. General Sheridan moved his infantry to Harrisonburg and occupied his cavalry with expeditions for the destruction of bridges and the gathering of supplies through an extent of country ranging from Waynesborough and Staunton on the south to Port Republic on the east. This position of the troops was maintained for several days, changes of station or movements of small importance being of daily occurrence. While at Port Republic, Merritt encountered Kershaw's division of infantry and Cutshaw's battalion of artillery, sent from Richmond to re-enforce Early, and an effort was made to bring on a general engagement, but the Confederate General declined the challenge and withdrew his troops to the east of the Blue Ridge. The main body of our army remained in and about Mount Crawford and Harrisonburg until the 6th of October, the cavalry covering the country to the Blue Ridge on the east and Staunton on the south, and destroying such supplies as could not be removed.

While occupying these positions General Sheridan was strongly urged by Generals Grant and Halleck to continue southward and pursue the Confederates toward Charlottesville and Gordonsville, break up those important railroad centers, and thence effect a junction with the forces that were besieging Richmond. To this plan his own judgment was opposed, as he would at every stage of his progress be met by a force that now, as it had been re-enforced, equaled his own, and that could be constantly increased by detachments from Richmond, while he could obtain nothing in the way of additions to his strength. In addition to this, it was absolutely im-



possible to provide an army of infantry and cavalry in large force with supplies either of ammunition or provisions in the country through which he was expected to move. In the position he was occupying—some one hundred miles from Martinsburg, the nearest depot of supplies—it was impossible to sufficiently provide his troops by wagon transportation, and the resources of the valley upon which he was now depending were being rapidly exhausted.

It had been proposed to relay and open the Orange and Alexandria Railroad as a means of supplying him while on the proposed expedition, but, apart from the delay that the completion of such a work would require, the large force of infantry needed to protect a railroad running through seventy miles of hostile country infested with guerrillas, and everywhere open to attacks by raiding parties, would take all the effective force of that arm in his command. His own opinion, which finally prevailed, was that the southwardly campaign should now terminate and that the army should return up the valley, removing or destroying all crops and supplies of every description that still remained, thus making it untenable for the Confederates; and when it appeared that the valley was safe from further hostile invasions, the troops not needed for further service there could be readily, swiftly, and safely transferred to the armies operating against Richmond.

General Grant finally acceded to the views of General Sheridan, and left him free to act as his own judgment should determine. Accordingly, on the 6th of October the army commenced its northward march, the infantry marching on the valley pike and preceding the cavalry, which was stretched

across the country from the Blue Ridge to the North Mountain, driving off all live stock and destroying other army supplies.

For the first two days of the march the enemy's cavalry followed our troops, making no hostile demonstrations, but on the 8th of October became more enterprising and gave considerable trouble to the cavalry that covered the rear. The enemy's mounted force was now commanded by General Rosser, who a few days before had joined Early, bringing with him a fresh brigade of cavalry from Richmond. This officer, who came to take command of troops that had not in the past been distinguished for success, had, on his arrival, been generally proclaimed as the "Savior of the Valley," and the troops he brought with him had ornamented their caps with laurel branches in anticipation of the honors they expected to gather in this new field. General Sheridan, who had been somewhat annoyed and impeded in his movements by the attacks his rear guard had sustained, told General Torbert on the evening of the 8th that he was expected to give battle with his cavalry to Rosser on the following day, and inflict on him a defeat that would render him harmless for the future; that until the affair was over the infantry would be halted, and that he proposed to witness the affair from Round Top Mountain. The main body of our army was in camp near Fisher's Hill, and the cavalry was formed for this action on the line of Tom's Brook, that crosses the valley pike and the back road about six miles south of Strasburg. The divisions of Generals Custer and Merritt composed the force under Torbert's orders, and at seven in the morning General Custer, on the right of

the line, attacked the head of Rosser's column. General Merritt moved up rapidly and, extending his right, connected with the other divisions, and in a short time the whole cavalry force on both sides was closely engaged.

The country was level and open, and the fighting on both sides was done in the saddle and sabers were the weapons mainly used. For two hours the result of the conflict was in doubt, charges and countercharges on both sides, sometimes succeeding, and again being repulsed; but at last, while the Confederate center held firm, the flanks began to waver, and as these receded a general charge along the whole front was made by the Northern troopers. This resulted in a complete breaking up of the Confederate line, and a few moments afterward in a complete rout, when every Southern trooper put spurs to his horse and strove to save himself as best he could. Our men pursued them hotly, and for more than twenty miles this wild stampede continued without a single effort on the part of the enemy to rally their force or check the pursuit. Three hundred prisoners, eleven pieces of artillery with their caissons, and every ambulance and wagon that the enemy possessed were captured and brought into our lines. This action—known as the battle of Tom's Brook, or, as many called it, the "Woodstock Races"—effectually checked the aggressive tendencies of the Confederate cavalry and cost them the good opinion of General Early, who reported to General Lee that his cavalry was so badly demoralized that it should be immediately dismounted.

On the day following the cavalry action at Tom's Brook the army continued its march, and crossing to

the north side of Cedar Creek, there went into camp; and the Sixth Corps was directed to continue its march to Front Royal, with the intention of returning to the Army of the Potomac. On the 12th the enemy's infantry, which had been following our troops, arrived at Fisher's Hill, and sent out a reconnoissance to examine our lines. The Sixth Corps was recalled, and at the same time a dispatch was received from General Grant that showed he had not abandoned the idea of the movement by Sheridan's army upon Charlottesville and Gordonsville that had previously been discussed, and, as Sheridan hoped, abandoned, and directed preparations for this operation to be made. At the same time General Sheridan received from the Secretary of War a request to proceed to Washington for a consultation that was said to be extremely desirable, as Secretary Stanton intended in a few days to visit General Grant.

As General Sheridan well knew, the Secretary of War and General Halleck agreed in the main with the views of General Grant as to the movement on Charlottesville and Gordonsville, which had been once insisted on, then abandoned, and were now renewed. Fully satisfied in his own mind of the inexpediency of such an operation, and confident that no success could be hoped from it, General Sheridan reluctantly concluded to leave his troops, and, making a brief trip to Washington, see what could be effected by presenting personally the strong opinions he had on this important question.

The journey was delayed on the 13th, for the enemy, having learned that the Sixth Corps had been ordered away, advanced from Fisher's Hill, and with

infantry and cavalry attacked a division of Crook's command that had been advanced toward Strasburg, and Custer's cavalry on the back road. After a heavy skirmish our infantry was driven back to the north bank of Cedar Creek, while Custer successfully repulsed the attack on his front.

On the 14th the Sixth Corps returned to the lines, and the army was found in a strong defensive position on the north bank of Cedar Creek, Crook's two divisions on the left holding the ground from the north bank of the Shenandoah to the valley pike, the Nineteenth Corps extending west of that road, and on its right and rear the Sixth Corps, the right flank of which was protected by two divisions of cavalry under General Torbert. The left of the army, toward Front Royal, was guarded by Powell's division of cavalry, formerly commanded by Averill, and it was intended to attack the enemy on the morning of the 15th; but Early, having found our force much stronger than he had at first believed, had withdrawn his troops to Fisher's Hill, and appeared occupied in providing for his own security.

General Sheridan finally concluded to make the intended visit to Washington, and while his absence from the army has been a subject of some criticism, in the light of subsequent events the importance of the question that he trusted to have finally determined justified his assuming some risk in the hope of reaching a definite settlement. Throughout the campaign the movement toward Charlottesville and Gordonsville, which he deemed a useless and wasteful expenditure of men and material and productive of no possible favorable results, had been constantly pressed upon him, and orders relating to such an



operation had interfered seriously with his own admirable plans.

On the morning of the 16th, leaving General Wright in command of the army, General Sheridan began his journey to Washington. He took with him as far as Front Royal all the cavalry, intending to send it through Chester Gap on an expedition to destroy bridges on the Virginia Central Railroad and cut off Early's communications with Richmond. At Front Royal he was overtaken by a courier from General Wright, who brought a copy of a Confederate dispatch that had been taken down as it was flagged from the Confederate signal station at Three Top Mountain, and translated by our signal officers, who were acquainted with the Confederate code of signals, and which read as follows :

*" To Lieutenant-General Early.*

*"Be ready to move as soon as my forces join you, and we will crush Sheridan.*

*" LONGSTREET, Lieutenant General."*

As the event proved, there was no actual basis for such a dispatch, and neither Longstreet nor any troops of his command were on the way to join Early; but while General Sheridan was convinced of these facts he thought best to take every precaution, and therefore ordered the cavalry back, to the end that the whole force of the army should be in the field to meet any possible movement of the enemy. General Wright was at the same time ordered to strengthen his position in every way, and be well prepared for any emergency.

In the dispatch that General Wright sent inclosing the Confederate signal message that officer said



that he was making every preparation for guarding against and resisting an attack upon his right, which was the only point at which he apprehended trouble. These precautions availed, however, but little, as the attack and surprise with which the battle of Cedar Creek commenced, and which drove from the field a large part of our force and threatened the defeat of the whole army, were made upon the left, the flank which was considered entirely secure. General Sheridan continued his journey and reached Washington early on the morning of the 17th, and at once met the Secretary of War and General Halleck at the War Department. A full and free consultation was held as to the future movements of the Army of the Shenandoah, and especially concerning the projects of operating east of the Blue Ridge and against Charlottesville and Gordonsville; General Sheridan at last succeeded in establishing his own position against these plans, and his views were substantially agreed to.

Much gratified with this success, which to his mind determined a successful issue of the valley campaign, he left Washington at twelve noon on a special train for Martinsburg, being of course most anxious to rejoin the army at the earliest possible moment, accompanied by two engineer officers who were charged with the duty of reporting on a defensive line in the valley that could be held securely, while the bulk of the troops should be transferred to the army in front of Petersburg. Martinsburg was reached the same day in the evening, and on the following morning General Sheridan, with a cavalry escort, started to ride to Winchester, about twelve miles north of Cedar Creek, which he reached at

four in the afternoon, and devoted the rest of the day to examining the ground that was proposed as the site of the position to be properly fortified for future occupation.

About sunset a courier arrived from Cedar Creek bringing word that everything was all right, that the enemy was quiet at Fisher's Hill, and that a brigade of the Nineteenth Corps was ordered to make a reconnoissance on the right at daylight of the morning of the 19th. Thus reassured, General Sheridan rested quietly at Winchester, and when toward six o'clock on the morning of the 19th faint sounds of irregular firing were heard at Winchester, they were supposed to result from the movements of the reconnoitering party that was expected to move out at that time. Later, however, as the firing continued and the sounds of cannonading were more distinctly heard, the general determined to go at once to the front, and before nine o'clock was on his way to the field.

While it must be admitted "that truth is mighty and will prevail," it is sometimes a subject of regret that historic facts often destroy the romance and splendor with which a poetic imagination can invest the realities of actual life, and upon General Sheridan's authority it appears that the thrilling story of Sheridan's Ride is a poetic conception, with as little foundation of truth as the heroic figure of Barbara Frietchie, who, another poet tells us, defied and resisted the power of Stonewall Jackson and his army. On the morning of the battle General Sheridan, on hearing the sound of the guns, rode from and not toward Winchester, and at a moderate pace, until about two miles south of the town he met on the road wounded men, stragglers, and numerous bag-

gage wagons, all making their way toward Winchester, and declaring only with too much certainty that serious disaster had overtaken the troops in the front. On inquiry he was told that the army had been defeated and was entirely broken up and in full retreat, but, knowing the exaggeration that always marks the statements of those who are the first to fly from a battlefield, he pressed forward, leaving directions that the troops at Winchester should be deployed across the valley, and that all fugitives should be halted and driven back again to the front lines.

After traveling on the road for a short distance it became so impeded with wagons and wounded men that it was necessary to take to the fields to advance rapidly. These impediments being passed, the general returned to the road, which he found lined on both sides with uninjured men, who, having got far enough to the rear to be out of danger, had quietly settled down to rest, and were preparing their coffee and taking the breakfast that the enemy's attack at daylight had delayed. As General Sheridan advanced, speaking a few but hearty words of encouragement and hope to those he met, the news of his arrival spread through the whole mass of these retreating men, and without organization or the orders of any officers they all rose and, turning their faces to the front, marched toward the enemy. After passing through Newtown, at a point about eight miles south of Winchester, the first organized troops were met, which proved to be two divisions of the Sixth Corps in line about three quarters of a mile west of the turnpike, and on their right and rear were the two divisions of the Nineteenth Corps.

Still farther to the front, two miles in advance of these forces, was found Getty's division of the Sixth Corps, which with the cavalry were acting as a rear guard, holding a barricade of rails and skirmishing slightly with the enemy's pickets.

General Sheridan, on riding to the front of the line, was received with cheers; it was at once evident that the courage and enthusiasm of the troops had returned, and that they could be relied on for future service as gallant and effective as any they had yet performed. As the cheers broke out on the left and rear of these troops of the Sixth Corps a line of regimental flags appeared, which proved to be the colors of the several regiments of the Eighth Corps, with most of the superior officers and some enlisted men. Headquarters were established immediately in rear of Getty's line, and Generals Wright and Crook, who were now met, briefly described the events of the early morning. General Wright was directed to resume command of his corps, and the divisions of the Sixth and Nineteenth Corps that had been passed on the road were ordered to the front and took position on the right and rear of Getty's division. General Crook was directed to hold what force he had on the left, and collect and reorganize his men, which he was enabled to do from the returning tide of stragglers, who were now coming to the front with even greater rapidity than that which earlier in the day they had exhibited in going to the rear.

From the moment of the arrival of General Sheridan on the field the whole current of movement was changed, and the army, invigorated by his presence and animated by the confidence that was felt in his leadership, was, by an impulse that was almost spon-

taneous, again ready and eager to resume the conflict of the morning. The effect produced by his unexpected and most welcome presence and the feeling excited in the troops have been graphically described by some who were present on the occasion. "Far away to the rear was heard cheer after cheer. What was the cause? Were re-enforcements coming? Yes, Phil. Sheridan was coming, and he was a host . . . Dashing along the pike, he came upon the line of battle. 'What troops are these?' shouted Sheridan. 'The Sixth Corps' was the response from a hundred voices. 'We are all right,' said Sheridan as he swung his hat and dashed along the line toward the right. 'Never mind, boys, we'll whip them yet, we'll whip them yet. We shall sleep in our quarters to-night,' were the encouraging words of the chief as he rode along, while the men threw their hats high in air, leaped and danced, and cheered in wildest joy." \* Another writer says,

"One thing at once struck me as curious—that the stream of men was now going toward Middletown. Astonished, I left Wheaton and galloped over to the pike, where I learned that Sheridan had just passed up; as well as can be ascertained, it was half past eleven o'clock, and directly after, meeting General Forsyth, chief of staff, I received orders to go to Newtown, form a guard, and collect all the stragglers I could and bring them up to the front. This I proceeded to do, and finally collected about two thousand men of all corps and brought them up and turned them over to the command of General Crook, then on our extreme left and rear. From

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\* Three Years in the Sixth Corps.



the time the Sixth Corps became engaged, at about 9 A. M., until Sheridan came up, about noon, the attacks of the enemy were on the whole feeble and ineffective. . . . Sheridan rode along his line, seeing for himself all his troops and saying a word or two as he went along to encourage them, to which they responded with cheers." \*

After reforming and arranging his lines, an operation that was not completed until past twelve o'clock, General Sheridan rode along the whole front of his infantry lines and satisfied himself by personal inspection that the *morale* of his troops was restored and that they could be relied on for gallant and determined work. Custer's division of cavalry was placed on the right flank, the Sixth and Nineteenth Corps composed the infantry front, General Crook's command was placed in column as a reserve, and Merritt's cavalry on the left. The ranks were already comparatively full, and their strength was being constantly increased by the arrival of stragglers and fugitives returning from the rear.

By this time General Early had become alarmed at the reports he received of the restoration of the Union lines and the aggressive attitude that the enemy he had supposed defeated was assuming. With much difficulty he called off his troops from the plunder of the Union camps and their enjoyment of the unwonted luxuries they had found, and prepared his left for a fresh assault. This attack was made upon the Nineteenth Corps and the right division of the Sixth, but our men were now prepared, and to some extent protected by temporary

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\* Colonel Crowninshield's Cedar Creek.



breastworks of logs and rails. No difficulty was found in repulsing this attack, and after a spirited but short contest the Confederates, who suffered heavily, fell back to their lines, and made no further aggressive movement.

The dispatch already referred to, which purported to announce the arrival of Longstreet with re-enforcements, was still present in General Sheridan's mind, and he was for the first time induced to put some faith in its authenticity, as he hardly believed that the enemy, unless heavily re-enforced, would venture upon an attack that risked the safety of his whole army if unsuccessful, and it seemed as if a considerably larger force than that Early was known to have had before these movements began was required to effect the results that were caused by the engagement of the early morning. To settle this question, the cavalry on the left made a quick dash upon an exposed battery of the enemy and captured a number of prisoners, from whom it was learned that Early had received no re-enforcements in addition to those which joined him at Brown's Gap in the latter part of September. This question being settled, an advance of the Union lines was ordered at four o'clock, and was made as promptly and cheerfully as if the troops were fresh and engaging for the first time on that day.

The enemy had improved the interval that had elapsed since his last unsuccessful attack and the advance of the rallied Union army by establishing his lines behind stone walls and making some other defensive preparations. His dread of being flanked by the cavalry had, however, caused him to extend his lines to such an extent that they were nowhere

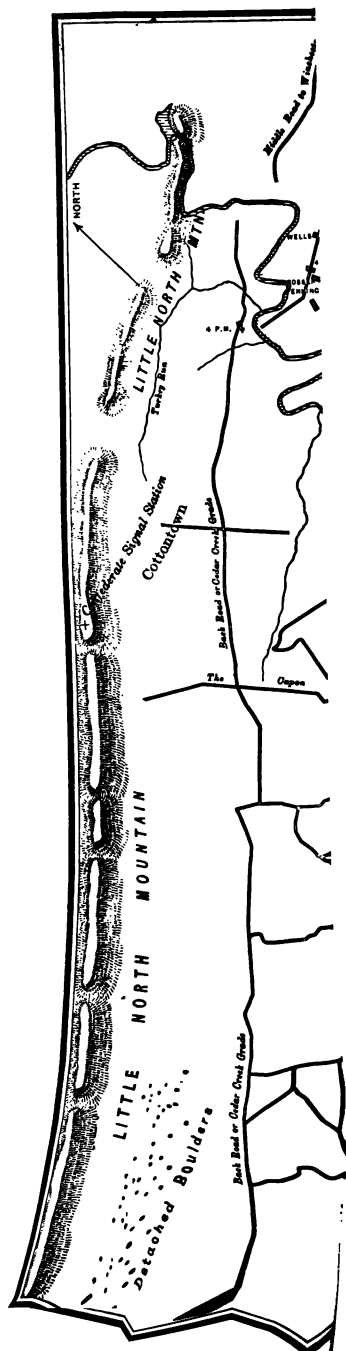
of sufficient strength to successfully resist a determined assault. The attack on Early's lines was begun by the Nineteenth Corps, on the right of our army, under the personal direction of General Sheridan, and taken up successively by the line from right to left, and, the cavalry on the flanks charging at the same time, the whole of General Early's force was at once swept away, without having been able to check our assaulting lines at any point, and as a whole driven from the field in a greater rout than had been seen on any battlefield since the beginning of the war.

It was the intention of General Sheridan to hold back his left after the enemy had been driven from their lines, and, by advancing his right, to throw the Confederates to the east of the valley pike, thus cutting off their retreat to Strasburg and Fisher's Hill; but the eagerness of the troops to avenge their reverses of the morning was beyond restraint, the left advanced equally with the right, and the whole line pressed forward till the old camps on Cedar Creek were regained. No better or more reliable account of this disastrous blow sustained by the enemy can be given than that contained in General Early's account of his defeat: "A portion of the enemy had penetrated an interval which was between Evans's brigade on the extreme left and the rest of the line, when that brigade gave way, and Gordon's other brigades soon followed. . . . Every effort was made to stop and rally Kershaw's and Ramseur's men, but the mass of them resisted all appeals, and continued to go to the rear." He adds that Ramseur only succeeded in retaining with him two or three hundred men out of his whole division, and Major Goggin, of Kershaw's staff, about the same number of Conner's

brigade; and when these troops were overwhelmed and Ramseur was mortally wounded, Pegram alone got "a portion of his command" across Cedar Creek in an organized condition, "but this small force soon dissolved." A part of Evans's brigade had been rallied, and held a ford above the bridge for a short time, "but it followed the example of the rest."

At Cedar Creek the pursuit by the infantry ceased, but the cavalry followed the enemy until he found refuge within the fortified lines on Fisher's Hill. The disorganized mass of fugitives made no attempt to check the pursuit or to save any property or material, and the cavalry captured guns, wagons, ambulances, and prisoners, that fell into their hands without any effort for defense. Early's losses in this engagement were about eighteen hundred killed and wounded, twelve hundred prisoners, twenty-four guns, fifty-six ambulances, and a number of battle flags. A large number of abandoned wagons and ambulances were burned for want of animals to bring them within the lines. The guns and ambulances lost in the morning by the Union troops were all retaken, and, with the exception of the loss sustained in men, our army reoccupied its old camp in as good condition as on the previous day.

It was not until the close of the day that General Sheridan was fully informed of the events that preceded his arrival on the field; and in a description of the battle it is proper they should be referred to to give a complete record of this long and arduous contest. After reaching Fisher's Hill, General Early found himself nearly destitute of supplies. The whole valley had been thoroughly foraged by our cavalry, and the nearest point from which subsist-





afternoon of the 18th been increased by the report of the officer who commanded a reconnoitering brigade sent out from General Crook's front, that the enemy had apparently retreated up the valley.

After dark on the night of the 18th the movement of the Confederates began. Three divisions of infantry commanded by General Gordon, with a brigade of cavalry, crossed the Shenandoah River at a point east of the works on Fisher's Hill and, marching northerly along the base of Massanutten Mountain, recrossed the river at Bowman's ford north of the junction of Cedar Creek and the Shenandoah, and thus obtained a position in rear of the left of General Crook's troops. General Early, with two divisions of his infantry, to be followed by all the artillery of his army, advanced directly to Cedar Creek, and there waited until the commencement of Gordon's attack. Some further operations by the cavalry were directed, but as none of these succeeded they do not require mention.

About five o'clock in the morning a light fire of musketry on the left and rear of the Union army informed the Confederates in front of Cedar Creek that Gordon had gained the position he aimed for and was driving in the pickets that protected that flank, and Early, his movement covered by a heavy fog, at once charged across Cedar Creek and fell upon the camps of the Eighth Corps, the men of which were still sleeping in their tents. The advanced division was swept away by this assault and driven in confusion upon the other troops, which, as they formed to resist the attack in front, were charged in flank and rear by the force under Gordon and forced to retreat with heavy loss.



The Nineteenth Corps, to the right and rear of the troops first attacked and defeated, was, fortunately, more prepared for an attack, as a reconnoissance had been ordered from that corps to be made at daybreak, and many of the men were awake and some armed before the engagement. The enemy, however, constantly advancing in front and on the left flank, turned the entire position, and this corps was also forced backward and to the right.

General Wright, as soon as the engagement opened, had acted promptly, and, appreciating the situation at once, ordered the Sixth Corps, as yet unattacked, to fall back to the first tenable position in the rear and then form line, while the Nineteenth Corps, whose position could not be held, was directed to retire and form on the right of the Sixth Corps. These movements were successfully made: a good defensive position taken, and the lines reformed about four or five miles north of the Union camps on Cedar Creek.

An attack was at once made upon these lines, but the Confederate force had been somewhat broken by the previous engagements, the hasty pursuit, and the loss of many men who had remained to plunder the abandoned camps; and though our troops suffered severely, the enemy was driven back with heavy loss, and for the time desisted from further aggressive movement. Shortly after this repulse of the enemy General Sheridan came on the field, and the further events of the day and the signal victory with which it closed have been already described.

This striking and brilliant culmination of operations in the valley—for this was the last action in that region in which any considerable bodies of

troops were actively engaged—closed a campaign that was unequalled for boldness, rapidity, and unvarying success. Within thirty days from the time active operations were begun at the battle of the Opequan the army of General Sheridan had in three pitched battles met, defeated, and driven in disorderly flight that of General Early. It had marched up and down the valley more than two hundred miles, and had rendered the country through which it passed useless as a source of Confederate supply.

The cavalry of the enemy had been routed in the open field by that of the Union army, and so disorganized and broken up as no longer to be considered a factor in hostile operations. A loss of at least eight thousand men—killed, wounded, and prisoners—had been suffered by the enemy, in addition to which fifty-eight pieces of artillery had been taken and a great quantity of supplies, small arms, wagons, and ambulances had been captured or destroyed.

When the news of this victory, that had been snatched from what appeared to have been a crushing defeat by the energy and courage of the commander of the army, became known, the public honors and congratulations that were lavished upon General Sheridan even exceeded those that he had already received in profusion. From the lines about Petersburg and Richmond one hundred guns, with shot and shell, told the story of Early's third defeat; and General Grant, communicating with the Secretary of War in reference to this last success, said: "Turning what had bid fair to be a disaster into glorious victory stamped Sheridan what I have always thought him—one of the ablest of generals."

When a few weeks later the President sent to

General Sheridan his well-won commission as major general in the regular army, he stated that the appointment was due to "the personal gallantry, military skill, and just confidence in the courage and patriotism of your troops displayed by you on the 19th day of October at Cedar Run, whereby, under the blessing of Providence, your routed army was re-organized, a great national disaster averted, and a brilliant victory achieved over the rebels for the third time in pitched battle within thirty days."

Congress a few months later, when it convened, passed a resolution tendering its thanks to "Major-General Philip H. Sheridan, and to the officers and men under his command, for the gallantry, military skill, and courage displayed in the brilliant series of victories achieved by them in the valley of the Shenandoah, and especially for their services at Cedar Run on the 19th day of October, 1864, which retrieved the fortunes of the day, and thus averted a great disaster." The battle of Cedar Creek is a striking instance of the uncertainty of war, and the great effects that unexpected events and circumstances, which the greatest prudence could not have foreseen or provided for, have upon the results of military operations and the decision of battles.

After the withdrawal of General Sheridan from the Southern valley the condition of the country was such that it was impossible for an army to subsist in it for any length of time, and it was beyond the scope of any sound military policy to assume that an army ill supplied and that had been twice defeated and put to flight would again try conclusions with the victors, flushed with success, well supplied, and in a strong position. So assured of this

were Generals Grant and Sheridan that preparations for dismembering the Army of the Shenandoah had begun, which included the immediate transfer of the most effective corps of infantry and a division of cavalry to the Army of the Potomac, and the removal of other parts of the force to a field of operations east of the Blue Ridge. The display made by Early of his force in a futile reconnoissance on the 13th caused the return of the Sixth Corps to the lines at Cedar Creek, and without the presence of that corps it is evident that the Confederate attack would have been a complete success.

The fictitious dispatch professing to announce the arrival of Longstreet with re-enforcements restored to the army the two divisions of cavalry that had started on an expedition to the Virginia Central Railway. For what purpose, or by what authority this information was given from the Confederate signal station has never been ascertained. That it was not official is evident, as neither Longstreet nor any re-enforcements were on the march, and it could not have been displayed designedly to create a false impression upon our commanders, as it was to Early's interest, meditating as he then did an attack, to carefully avoid any suggestions that would tend to increased watchfulness by his adversaries. Early was also much favored by the chance that shrouded the first movements of his troops in a thick fog and permitted the surprise that was his only hope of succeeding in his attack, and by the accidental absence of General Sheridan, of which he had no knowledge. The unexpected and opportune return of the Union leader to his troops at the critical moment when his presence was indispensable, was again one

of those events that no calculation or plan could have provided for; yet all these accidents, favoring now one and now the other combatant, neutralized each other in the end, and as soon as a firm and determined will and a steady hand controlled the situation doubt had ceased, and no question of the final result existed.

#### SHERIDAN'S RIDE AND RIENZI.

[The following is Thomas Buchanan Read's extremely popular poem referred to by the author on page 182. The artist-poet also illustrated the same subject by a spirited painting, which was one of the few articles that General Grant retained at the time of his financial troubles, and which is still in the possession of his family. The accompanying vignette is another representation of Sheridan's Ride, being a copy of a statuette modeled by James E. Kelly, of New York :



Up from the south at break of day,  
 Bringing to Winchester fresh dismay,  
 The affrighted air with a shudder bore,  
 Like a herald in haste, to the chieftain's door,  
 The terrible grumble and rumble and roar,  
 Telling the battle was on once more,  
 And Sheridan twenty miles away.

And wider still those billows of war  
Thundered along the horizon's bar,  
And louder yet into Winchester rolled  
The roar of that red sea uncontrolled,  
Making the blood of the listener cold  
As he thought of the stake in that fiery fray,  
With Sheridan twenty miles away.

But there is a road from Winchester town,  
A good broad highway leading down ;  
And there through the flash of the morning light  
A steed as black as the steeds of night  
Was seen to pass as with eagle flight.  
As if he knew the terrible need,  
He stretched away with the utmost speed ;  
Hills rose and fell—but his heart was gay,  
With Sheridan fifteen miles away.

Under his spurning feet the road  
Like an arrowy Alpine river flowed,  
And the landscape sped away behind  
Like an ocean flying before the wind ;  
And the steed, like a bark fed with furnace ire,  
Swept on with his wild eyes full of fire ;  
But lo ! he is nearing his heart's desire,  
He is snuffing the smoke of the roaring fray,  
With Sheridan only five miles away.

The first that the general saw were the groups  
Of stragglers, and then the retreating troops ;  
What was done—what to do—a glance told him both,  
And, striking his spurs with a terrible oath,  
He dashed down the line 'mid a storm of huzzahs,  
And the wave of retreat checked its course then because  
The sight of the master compelled it to pause.  
With foam and with dust the black charger was gray ;  
By the flash of his eye and his nostrils' play  
He seemed to the whole great army to say,  
" I have brought you Sheridan all the way  
From Winchester down, to save the day ! "



Hurrah, hurrah for Sheridan !  
Hurrah, hurrah for horse and man !  
And when their statues are placed on high,  
Under the dome of the Union sky—  
The American soldier's Temple of Fame—  
Then with the glorious general's name  
Be it said in letters both bold and bright ;  
    " Here is the steed that saved the day  
    By carrying Sheridan into the fight,  
    From Winchester—twenty miles away !"

The famous war-horse Rienzi, "that saved the day" at Cedar Creek, was given to General Sheridan at Rienzi, a small village in Mississippi, in August, 1863, by Captain Campbell, of the Second Michigan Cavalry ; hence the horse's name. He was of Morgan stock—jet black, excepting three white feet ; about sixteen hands high ; strongly built, with great powers of endurance, and could fairly walk over five miles an hour. On this account Rienzi was cordially hated by Sheridan's staff and escort, because on the march their horses were compelled to go on a "dog trot" in order to keep up. The general rode him almost continuously in every campaign and battle till the close of the war. Rienzi was wounded at Stone River, in the assault on Missionary Ridge, to the crest of which he carried Sheridan, and twice at Fisher's Hill. Notwithstanding these four wounds, the famous horse lived until 1878, and he may now be seen in the Museum of the Military Service Institution on Governor's Island, New York, having been set up soon after his death by a skilled taxidermist.—EDITOR.]

## CHAPTER X.

WINTER QUARTERS. — CLEARING THE VALLEY. —  
WAYNESBOROUGH. — RETURN TO ARMY OF THE  
POTOMAC.

THE routed Confederate army made no effort to hold the lines at Fisher's Hill, but after a brief halt at that point continued the retreat until it arrived at Newmarket. A small rear guard of cavalry, left within the lines, fled as our troops prepared to attack on the morning of the 20th. At Newmarket, some forty miles south of Cedar Creek, it was possible to supply the Confederate army, and there Early did what was in his power to reorganize his army and put it in condition for active service. The same reasons that prevented the Confederate army from maintaining itself in the northern portion of the valley prohibited our forces from following up the success of Cedar Creek, as the whole valley was now destitute of supplies. General Sheridan withdrew his troops to Kernstown, three miles south of Winchester, where supplies could be more readily obtained, and where fortified lines were constructed that would allow the position to be held by a comparatively weaker force than that required for operations in the open country, and permit, as opportunity offered, the detach-

ing such force as could be spared to strengthen the army under General Grant.

On the 11th of November General Early had received a considerable addition to his force by the return of convalescents and conscripts absent on details, and a brigade from Breckinridge, now commanding in southwest Virginia; and learning that the Union army had fallen back from Cedar Creek to Kernstown, thinking this movement might be intended to cover the detachment of troops to Petersburg, advanced from Newmarket and made a demonstration against the lines about Kernstown. Finding that General Sheridan was ready and anxious for battle, after a brief reconnoissance he withdrew his infantry on the 12th of November and returned to Newmarket, endeavoring to protect his rear with cavalry. Our own cavalry at once pursued, and, as usual, drove and routed that of the Confederates over all the roads they endeavored to cover, capturing two pieces of artillery, several caissons and ammunition wagons, two battle flags, and three hundred prisoners.

General Early, on his return to Newmarket from this expedition, appeared at last to have realized the fact that further attacks upon the enemy that so often had met and defeated him were useless, and began to detach troops to the army of General Lee. In the latter part of November a cavalry reconnoissance from our lines ascertained that Kershaw's division had been returned to Petersburg, and later it was learned that the Second Corps of the Confederate army, the command that Early had brought first to the valley, was also moving in the same direction. This reduction of the Confederate forces

justified detachments from our lines, and by the middle of December the whole of the Sixth Corps had been transferred to the army under Grant.

While this pause in the movements of the main armies occurred an opportunity was given to pay some attention to the bands of guerrillas that had constantly annoyed our troops, and by requiring the presence of large escorts for supply trains and officers engaged in carrying dispatches or on detached duty had much weakened the force available for actual combat. Of these, the most active and offensive was Mosby, whose force was recruited from the country about Upperville and Leesburg, on the eastern side of the Blue Ridge, and in which, as it was not occupied by our forces, he took refuge whenever hardly pressed.

The murder of Colonel Tolles, chief quartermaster, Medical-Inspector Olchenslager, Lieutenant Meigs, and other officers, as well as that of many stragglers, orderlies, and messengers within our lines by these men, had rendered necessary some effort to repress them; and while it was difficult to capture them individually on account of their intimate knowledge of the country and the disguises they assumed, it was possible to break up their places of rendezvous and the source of their supplies. This duty was assigned to General Merritt, who, with his division, overran the county of Loudon and destroyed the crops, bringing in on his return large herds of cattle, hogs, and sheep, which were issued as subsistence to our troops, and some five hundred horses, which thereafter did loyal service in the ranks of the Union cavalry.

A successful cavalry raid by the enemy on the

large reduction of the army had been made, and winter had set in with exceptional severity, General Grant continued to urge the necessity of the expedition of which he thought so highly, and much against his better judgment, Sheridan at length directed that the attempt should be made by the cavalry and this force moved out on the 19th of December.

General Torbert, with two divisions, moved through Ashby's Gap, in the direction of Gordonsville, while General Custer marched toward Staunton, with the purpose of attracting the attention of the enemy from Torbert's column. The weather was most unfavorable for the movement of troops, as the roads were incumbered with snow and the cold excessive, the temperature at night often falling below zero. Neither of the columns reached their objective points, and both, after being repulsed, were compelled to return, with slight loss of men and animals, but suffering much from the extreme cold and from frostbites, and reached Winchester on the 27th of December. This expedition was the last movement of any importance during the winter, and the cavalry was put into winter quarters near Winchester. At the beginning of the new year one of the two divisions of the Nineteenth Corps was sent on to Petersburg, and the effective force of the Army of the Shenandoah was thus reduced to one division of infantry and three of cavalry. The weakness of the force under his command required of General Sheridan increased vigilance and constant information of the movements and resources of the enemy, and this was obtained to the fullest extent by the excellent force of scouts that had been organized in the past summer. Dis-

guised as Confederate soldiers, they rode through all parts of the enemy's country, and were often in the Confederate camps, where they procured accurate knowledge of all important facts, which was quickly forwarded to headquarters. In February, 1865, a party of these men, led by their commander, Major Young, representing themselves as Confederate soldiers pursued by Union cavalry, penetrated eighty miles into the enemy's country, and in their assumed character entered the headquarters of Harry Gilmor, a notorious guerrilla, who commanded for a long time one of the most troublesome partisan bands that infested the rear of our armies. He was captured in his bed, and many of his men were also taken; and the pursuing Union cavalry quickly arriving, the only part of the story that was not fictitious, the prisoners were brought back to our lines. Some other minor expeditions and scouting and raiding parties were from time to time sent out, but no important movement took place until the end of February. Advantage was taken of this interval to refit and equip the cavalry, which had become much run down after nearly twelve months of continued activity. Many fresh horses were obtained, and the numerical force was increased by the return of convalescents, the re-equipment of dismounted men, and a number of recruits that were received by the several regiments.

Toward the last of February the force immediately under General Early, who had continued at Staunton through the winter, consisted of two brigades of infantry, which were stationed in that town. The remainder of his infantry had been returned to the other armies from which it had been detached.



The two brigades of Fitzhugh Lee's cavalry, which had joined him in the fall, had returned to Petersburg. Rosser's cavalry had been scattered through the country at such points as most readily afforded forage, which could not be procured at Staunton; and Lomax with his division was encamped at Millborough, some thirty miles southwest of Staunton.

Through the winter General Grant, in correspondence, had frequently referred to the destruction of the Virginia Central Railroad, which it was evident he was still determined to accomplish. On the 8th of February he wrote: "There is no enemy now to prevent you from reaching the Virginia Central Railroad, and possibly the canal, when the weather will permit you to move"; and on the 20th he continued: "As soon as it is possible to travel, I think you will have no difficulty about reaching Lynchburg with a cavalry force alone. From there you could destroy the railroad and canal in every direction."

The disintegration of Early's army had made this operation more feasible than it had been at any previous time, and the increasing pressure that our armies were bringing to bear on Petersburg and Richmond rendered it certain that no troops could be detached from the defense of those cities to assist in preventing the movements of our forces in this direction. The advance of General Sherman northward through the Carolinas was also calling for the concentration of all available Confederate soldiers in the South and East, and it was evident that no considerable force could be gathered to defend the objective points it was proposed to assail.

General Sheridan, after a thorough examination of all the existing conditions, believed that the time

had arrived when this movement could be made with good prospect of a favorable result; and though he never expressed his thoughts on the subject, there is little doubt but that he perceived the valley of the Shenandoah had ceased to be a field for active operations or a source of future danger, and that he was anxious to take part in the greater struggles in more important fields that were soon to occur and finally determine the result of four years of conflict.

On receiving his orders he moved out from Winchester on February 27, 1865, taking with him two divisions of cavalry, which were commanded by General Merritt, who had succeeded to the position of chief of cavalry, and which at the time comprised nearly ten thousand men, all in excellent condition, having been well rested and thoroughly equipped during the winter's repose. Four guns only accompanied the column, as from the condition in which the roads were expected to be found it was thought a greater number would cause more delay and trouble than any service they could render would justify. Eight ambulances, sixteen ammunition wagons, eight pontoon boats, and a small supply train carrying only coffee, sugar, and salt, accompanied the troops, who carried on their horses rations and forage sufficient to subsist them on their march through the exhausted valley, and were afterward to depend upon the country they passed through for supplies. A brigade of Powell's cavalry division and the remaining division of the Nineteenth Corps were left to protect the lines about Winchester, and proved more than sufficient for that purpose.

The orders of General Grant which directed the present movement required the destruction of the

Virginia Central Railroad and the James River Canal, and the capture of Lynchburg, if practicable. These results obtained, General Sheridan was ordered, if the condition of affairs after the capture of Lynchburg justified the movement, to seek out and join General Sherman in North Carolina, or, if he found this inexpedient, to return to Winchester.

As the expedition started the weather was cold and bleak and the valley and the mountains were covered with snow, but a warm and heavy rain that began to fall early in the day soon caused this to disappear. Woodstock was reached on the first day's march, and on the second the troops crossed the north fork of the Shenandoah on their pontoon bridge and camped for the night at Lacy's Springs, having marched sixty miles and seeing nothing of the enemy but a few scouts, who appeared from time to time on the flanks of the column.

On the 1st of March the expedition passed through Harrisonburg, and at Mount Crawford the first opposition was encountered. At this place General Rosser was met, who had succeeded in collecting some five or six hundred of his cavalry, and he made an attempt to burn the bridges over the middle fork of the Shenandoah and thus delay the advance of our troops. Two regiments of West Virginia cavalry swam the stream, and, attacking Rosser in flank, forced him to retreat with his accustomed celerity, leaving behind him thirty prisoners and his ambulances and wagons.

Staunton was reached on the morning of March 2d, and was entered without opposition. It was learned here that General Early had on the previous night marched thence to Waynesborough with

his infantry and Rosser's cavalry, thus leaving the direct road to Lynchburg open, and it became a question whether to move upon that place, leaving an enemy in the rear, or turn eastward and, after disposing of this force, move through Rockfish Gap and destroy the railroad and canal, which were the primary objects of attack. As it was known that Early's force did not exceed two thousand men, and there was every reason to believe he would make a stand at Waynesborough, he having told citizens of Staunton that he intended to fight at that place, it was decided to follow him, and Custer's division was given the advance.

The rains which had fallen almost incessantly since leaving Winchester had rendered the roads very difficult and at times almost impassable; men and horses were covered with mud from head to foot, and progress was toilsome in the extreme. Confidence created by past success and the expectations of inflicting a new defeat upon an enemy, who had been so often overpowered, stimulated the activity of the troops as no other motives could have done, and the difficulties of the roads were cheerfully met and quickly passed.

General Early had kept his promise to his friends at Staunton, for he was found occupying a ridge west of Waynesborough with his two brigades of infantry and his artillery posted behind a line of breastworks, and Rosser's cavalry on his flanks. General Custer, on examining the position, found the left flank somewhat exposed, and attacked that with one of his brigades dismounted, while at the same time the rest of his command assaulted along the whole line of works. The resistance was but slight, and the whole

position was soon carried, with a loss so small on either side that no record of it has been kept. All of the supplies, tents, ammunition, and transportation of the enemy fell into the hands of the victors, and seventeen battle flags, sixteen hundred officers and men, and eleven pieces of artillery were captured on the field. Rosser, with his small force of cavalry, succeeded in escaping to the valley, and General Early, in company with Generals Wharton, Long, and Lilly, as was reported at the time, "took to the woods," and from that time rendered no further service to the Southern Confederacy. This engagement, in some respects of slight moment so far as the numbers engaged or the severity of the action are considered, is worthy of note as illustrating the completeness with which General Sheridan had accomplished the duty he undertook when assuming command of the Army of the Shenandoah. Within a period of six months a Confederate army which on many fields had defeated every attempt to withstand its advance or check its operations, had pillaged the fields and burned the towns of Maryland and Pennsylvania, had besieged the capital of the nation and spread dismay through the whole North, had been entirely defeated, broken, and driven one hundred and fifty miles from the scene of its anticipated triumph. At the last desperate effort of resistance all that remained to it of men, of arms, and of war material was swept away. The commanding general was a harmless and solitary fugitive, and the Shenandoah Valley, in the length and breadth of which no organized body of Confederate soldiers remained, was no longer a hostile country. The prisoners and captured guns were sent to Winchester



under a sufficient escort, which was for a time annoyed while on the march by Rosser with the remnants of his cavalry. At Mount Jackson he made a strong attack in the hope of rescuing the prisoners, but was completely defeated and left some of his own force to be numbered among the captives.

While a portion of his command remained at Waynesborough to destroy the captured wagons and supplies, which from the condition of the roads could not be removed, and to blow up the railroad bridge at that town, General Sheridan, on the 3d of March, moved on to Charlottesville, which he reached the same afternoon. His advance was met in the outskirts of the town by the mayor and a deputation of prominent citizens, who appeared to offer a surrender in due form and according to ancient customs. As Charlottesville possessed no gates or walls, there were no keys of the city to deliver to the conqueror, but as the most available substitute the keys of all the public buildings were handed over, and General Sheridan found himself in full possession and control of the courthouse, the jail, the University of Virginia, and several taverns and churches. While this interesting ceremony was being performed, General Custer, who in an enemy's country was never idle and always inquisitive, rode through the town and had the fortune to overtake and capture a small force of cavalry and three pieces of artillery, for whose escape it had been hoped that the delay caused by the formal surrender would afford an excellent opportunity.

At Charlottesville the command was for a time divided, one division marching down the Charlottesville and Lynchburg Railroad as far as Amherst



Court House, thoroughly destroying the road for sixteen miles, while another force marched eastward along the James River Canal, which was also broken up. The two columns united at Newmarket on the river, but the stream had been so swollen by the recent rains as to be unfordable, all the bridges had been destroyed by the enemy, and the pontoon train that had been brought with the troops was not sufficient to construct a bridge of the length required in the present state of the river.

The impossibility of crossing prevented the execution of that part of the plan of movement that related to effecting a junction with the army of General Sherman, and as no enemy remained in the Shenandoah Valley and a return to Winchester would effect no useful purpose and would only serve to remove the troops to a greater distance than they now were from the scene of future active operations about Richmond and Petersburg, General Sheridan decided to destroy more thoroughly the canal and railroad and then make his way to the east and join General Grant in front of Petersburg.

It was not believed that this inability to penetrate into North Carolina and pursue a long and somewhat uncertain search after General Sherman's column was a source of much disappointment to General Sheridan, and it is certain that the course he did pursue when thus left to exercise his own judgment was the best and wisest that could have been taken. He had always been convinced that at Richmond and Petersburg the main strength and all the prospects of the Southern Confederacy were concentrated, and that a victory that should drive the rebels from those cities would virtually close the

war. There he believed the main strength of the Northern army should be gathered, and there the heaviest blows should be struck, and he had no cause to regret that circumstances permitted his taking an active part in what he was assured would be the last and decisive campaign of the civil war.

On the 9th of March the columns started eastward along the James River and thoroughly destroyed the locks, dams, and boats along the canal as far as Goochland, a distance of more than fifty miles, and at several points the banks were cut so that the current of the river, then greatly swollen by the spring freshets, was turned into the canal. The work on the canal having been completed, a rest of one day was taken at Columbia to permit the concentration of the command and to bring up the delayed wagons. The rain had continued almost steadily through the whole march, and the roads were scarcely passable for mounted men. The movement of guns and wagons was an almost impossible task, and could not have been accomplished but for the large captures of mules from Early's trains, which furnished animals to replace those that became worn out or exhausted, and the assistance of some two thousand negroes who followed the column and who gave all the help in their power to the troops that were furnishing them the opportunity of escape from slavery.

From Columbia, which General Sheridan reached on the 10th, dispatches were sent to General Grant reporting the events of the campaign and the intended march to join the Army of the Potomac. White House landing, on the Pamunkey River, had been determined on as the place to which the column would

move to open communication with General Grant's forces, and a request was made that forage and supplies, with a pontoon bridge of sufficient length to span the Pamunkey River, be sent to that point. As it was of the utmost importance that this message should safely reach General Grant, duplicates were sent, each copy confided to two scouts of Young's force. The risks assumed by these men and the daring nature of their enterprises may be judged from the routes they took. Two of them were ordered to go overland direct to City Point, a journey of more than one hundred miles through the enemy's country, by the shortest possible line; the others were to float down the James River in a small boat to Richmond, from there, representing themselves as Confederate soldiers, to join the troops in the trenches at Petersburg, and at the first opportunity desert to the Union lines and deliver their dispatch to General Grant. It is gratifying to know that all of these daring adventurers succeeded in their perilous task and safely reached the lines of our army, those sent overland to City Point arriving first.

From Columbia the troops moved northward to the Virginia Central Railroad, and the road was torn up and destroyed from Louisa Court House to Beaver Dam. At a telegraph station on the railroad a dispatch was found from General Early, who it was learned was in the neighborhood with about two hundred men and proposing to harass the flanks of our column. A regiment of General Custer's was sent out after this last remnant of the Army of the Valley, and it was soon overtaken, captured, and dispersed. General Early was closely pursued, but as usual succeeded in effecting a retreat, and on the fol-

lowing day, accompanied by a single orderly, he rode into Richmond to report to his superiors as best he could his operations in the Shenandoah Valley.

While this work on the railroad was going on, it was learned through the scouts and captured dispatches that a force was being assembled at Richmond to prevent the junction of General Sheridan's troops with the Army of the Potomac. A movement of one division toward Ashland, threatening an attack on Richmond, concentrated the enemy in this direction; under cover of this demonstration the command was marched northward, and by the morning of the 16th the whole column had crossed to the north bank of the Pamunkey River. On the 18th the whole force reached White House, and there found in abundance the supplies that had been called for and an opportunity to rest and refit.

While the loss of men in this expedition had been slight, not in all exceeding one hundred, the severity of the weather and the fearful condition of the roads had greatly impaired the strength of the command by the loss of horses that resulted from these conditions. A great number had fallen exhausted on the march, and many more reached the camp at White House so worn out by toil and disease as to be incapable of further service. They suffered not only from hardships and the fatigue of the march, but a contagious disease had broken out among them known as "hoof rot," which had on several previous occasions caused great loss of animals among our cavalry forces. From all these causes the services of not less than three thousand effective men were lost in these two divisions.

A great and important work had, however, been

well and thoroughly performed. No enemy could now be found in Virginia north of the James River and east of the Alleghanies; two important lines of supply connecting the Confederate capital with the West had been completely destroyed, and the army besieging Richmond and Petersburg had been re-enforced by more than seven thousand veteran troops accustomed to victory in the past and confident of future success.

## CHAPTER XI.

DINWIDDIE COURT HOUSE.—FIVE FORKS.—PURSUIT  
OF LEE.—SAILOR'S CREEK.—APPOMATTOX.—SUR-  
RENDER.

THE transfer of the cavalry column under General Sheridan to the armies on the James River was not expected by General Grant, who first learned of it on the arrival of the scouts who brought the request that supplies be sent to White House, but he at once appreciated the wisdom of the movement and the importance to him of so large an addition to his cavalry force in the active operations that were soon to begin.

General Sheridan remained at White House until the 25th of March, and the time was occupied in resting and refitting the men and horses, and especially in reshoeing the latter, but it was not possible to procure animals to supply the place of those which had been lost or disabled, and a large body of dismounted men was sent by boat to the camps at City Point. When the mounted portion of the force had been prepared to move it was marched to Hancock Station, on the military railroad in front of Petersburg, and, reaching there on the 27th of March, took a position adjoining the camps of the Second Division of the cavalry corps of the Army of the Potomac. This



division, when the others were transferred to the Army of the Shenandoah, had remained with the main army at Petersburg, and had seen much and hard service through the fall and winter, though it was not of a character as brilliant or striking as that of its comrades in the valley. The character of the country, which was such as generally to require the men to fight dismounted, and the necessity of so limiting their movements as to keep within constant touch of an army that was engaged in the slow operations of a siege, had prevented any enterprises of great moment; and the exactions of the heavy picket duty, always required by General Meade for the protection of his infantry lines, had kept a large part of the force inactive.

The division was well equipped, supplied, and mounted, though the same disease that had destroyed many of General Sheridan's horses had, under different conditions, broken out in this division, and since the 1st of March nearly one thousand horses had been disabled and rendered useless. The division at the time General Sheridan returned numbered about three thousand five hundred effective mounted men, under the command of Major-General Crook, who had been ordered from West Virginia to take command, replacing General Gregg, who had been compelled by failing health to resign from the service in February.

The three cavalry divisions were now by orders reunited under the command of General Sheridan, and the corps thus formed no longer continued attached to the Army of the Potomac, but entered on the campaign as a separate army, its commander reporting directly to General Grant, who had recog-

nized the sacrifice that Sheridan had made in voluntarily abandoning his position in the valley as a department commander and the general of an independent army and coming with a force of two divisions only to seek such service as he might be called upon to perform at the scene of active operations.

Sheridan did not accompany his troops on the march from White House, but rode directly to Grant's headquarters at City Point. After some conversation on the events of the expedition which had resulted in bringing the cavalry to Petersburg, General Grant unfolded his plans for the intended movement which was to commence on the 29th, and while handing to Sheridan a copy of the general instructions for the army that had been prepared, explained in detail the service that he expected from the cavalry. These were that after moving out on the left flank of the Army of the Potomac Sheridan was to break off his connection with those troops, and, moving southward along the Danville Railroad, cross the Roanoke River and join General Sherman, whose army was at this time at Goldsborough, in North Carolina, one hundred and forty-five miles south of Petersburg.

To that part of these instructions which involved a separation from the Army of the Potomac and a long march to unite with Sherman's army General Sheridan took the liberty of dissenting, and expressed very fully his objections to such a course and his reasons for thinking it prejudicial to the success of any operation looking to the ultimate defeat of Lee and a speedy termination of the war. As had been thoroughly proved, General Sherman's army was not only strong enough to maintain itself, but was so superior

to that which confronted it, under Johnston, that there was no doubt of our success in the event of a battle. That if Johnston should attempt to move north to Lee's assistance, Sherman's army, which was in light marching order and accustomed to swift movement, could pursue with sufficient rapidity to be present and effective when the Confederate armies met. That if Lee should attempt to evacuate his lines and unite with Johnston, while the infantry of the Army of the Potomac could pursue, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to prevent his movement or delay his progress without the aid of a numerous and efficient cavalry force, and that the immediate and most harmful result of this proposed transfer of the cavalry would be to take ten thousand effective and veteran mounted troops from the field of active operations and render them useless for any practical purpose with either army during whatever time might be occupied in their march into North Carolina.

In addition to these purely military reasons, General Sheridan contended that it would be a great wrong and injustice to the Army of the Potomac—that for four years had contended in varying fortune, but always with signal bravery and heroic endurance, against the Army of Northern Virginia—to call in other troops to their assistance at a time when their long-continued efforts had placed their antagonist in their power and they were able with one well-directed effort to obtain unaided the victory for which they had toiled so long; that the cavalry he commanded had always belonged to the Army of the Potomac, and had the right to fight with and assist it in the coming strife and share any honors it might gain.

These arguments, which were earnestly urged, evi-

dently made a strong impression upon General Grant, and much to General Sheridan's satisfaction he intimated that the orders as given were but provisional, and could be varied or changed upon due occasion. As will be seen, however, this suggestion of uniting with General Sherman's army was not then entirely abandoned by General Grant, and on future occasions he still believed it to be advisable and was inclined to insist upon it.

General Sheridan was somewhat disturbed on the afternoon of the next day by receiving an invitation to visit headquarters and there meet General Sherman, who had come up from North Carolina to consult about future movements, and, as he says, knowing the zeal and emphasis with which that officer could present his views, he feared that the disposition of the cavalry corps which had been agreed to might again be changed. At the earliest possible moment he reached headquarters and found the subject he had so much at heart under discussion. General Sherman at once entered upon his plans and explained in detail how he would move his army up from North Carolina and join the troops besieging Petersburg and Richmond, when these cities must at once fall into our hands, and assumed as a matter of course that General Sheridan with his cavalry would be ordered, after destroying the South Side and Danville Railroads, to join his forces. General Sheridan made no remarks upon such movements as were confined to the army of General Sherman, but strenuously renewed his objections to the suggestions of the course to be taken by the cavalry, and General Grant finally closed the conversation by stating that the plans previously agreed on remained unchanged.

On the following morning, before General Sheridan had left his bed, General Sherman came to his tent and renewed the subject of a junction between the cavalry and his army, but was at last compelled to abandon the subject, becoming satisfied that his views would under no circumstances be concurred in.

Hoping this disagreeable subject was at last disposed of, the necessary preparations for the march were made, but on the night of the 28th, when final instructions were received, it was apparent that this much-vexed question had not yet been finally determined in the mind of the commanding general. These instructions in the first instance directed that the cavalry should move out on the morning of the 29th, and, keeping on the left flank of the advancing infantry columns, pass near to or through Dinwiddie Court House, and reach the right and rear of the enemy as soon as possible. It was not the intention of General Grant, as he stated in these instructions, to attack the enemy in his intrenched position, but, if possible, to force him out. If the enemy should move out of his works and attack our forces, or place himself in a position where he could be attacked, General Sheridan was ordered to move in with his whole force in his own way, and assured that the army would engage or pursue the enemy as circumstances might dictate. If General Sheridan should find that the enemy persisted in keeping within his intrenched lines, he was then to cut loose from the main army and devote his efforts to the destruction of the South Side and Danville Railroads. Having accomplished this work, it was left to his discretion to return to the Army of the Potomac or to join the army of General Sherman.



While from these orders it was apparent that General Grant, with the characteristic tenacity with which he clung to any idea that he had once matured, still had in his mind the plan of using his cavalry force to destroy these railroads and then cooperate with Sherman, a very wide discretion was left to Sheridan, and as the first day's march that he was ordered to make would bring him close to, if not in actual touch, with the enemy's lines, he began his movement with a hopeful expectation that circumstances would occur to prevent his complying with those portions of the order that tended to separate his forces from the Army of the Potomac. That his expectation was well founded appeared in the course of the following campaign, as the only orders received from headquarters that required to be complied with or in any way affected his movements were those directing the first day's march to Dinwiddie Court House, and from that day until the surrender of the Confederate army every operation of the cavalry force and of the several corps of infantry that from that time were associated with it was suggested and carried out by Sheridan, of course with the sanction and approval of General Grant, which on all occasions was willingly given.

The cavalry marched with but eight guns in all and a small train of ambulances, ammunition, and supply wagons, but at times even these were found a most annoying incumbrance. For miles about Petersburg the country is low and everywhere abounding in swamps and quicksands, and in the driest weather water can be found by digging to a depth of ten feet or less. The roads at this early season were scarcely passable, and in the fields it



was impossible to move horses and wagons. It was necessary to make a wide sweep to the left to avoid the better roads on which the infantry was marching, and the country cross roads that the cavalry was obliged to use were the worst to be found in that hopeless region. In spite of these obstacles, the column was pressed forward, and about five in the afternoon General Sheridan, with two divisions, reached Dinwiddie Court House after a march of twenty-five miles. The third division, that of General Custer, was left on the road to bring up the wagons, which in various conditions of almost hopeless embarrassment were mired at intervals along the line of march, and which the men in charge had frequently to unload and lift bodily out of the mud before they could be moved. At Dinwiddie Court House some pickets of the enemy were found and a few prisoners made. From the prisoners and our scouts it was learned that the cavalry of Lee's army, which for convenience of obtaining forage had been stationed at some distance to the right, was marching within a few miles of our front to unite with the main body of their forces.

The Court House was a most important point to occupy in the proposed campaign, as five main roads centered there, which gave access to the left of our infantry, the right of Lee's army, and also opened routes to the south and west available for the suggested movements against the railroads. During the night a heavy rain began, which continued through the whole of the next day, and this rendered the already miry roads for the time perfectly impassable to wagons or artillery. During the night of the 29th and the morning of the 30th General Lee,

to meet the movement of our troops toward his right, established the right flank of his infantry line at a point known as Five Forks, five miles northwest from Dinwiddie Court House, where it was protected by strong earthworks, and also massed his cavalry under command of General Fitzhugh Lee at the same place.

Early on the morning of the 30th a division of our cavalry was sent out from Dinwiddie Court House to reconnoiter the ground toward Five Forks and a force placed in position to protect the left of the cavalry position. Soon after the troops moved out a dispatch from General Grant was received which indicated that he was inclined to suspend active operations on account of the adverse weather and which directed the withdrawal of the bulk of the cavalry. General Sheridan, who possibly had better information of the position of the enemy and of the possibilities of success from continued aggressive movement than was possessed at army headquarters, at once rode over to General Grant, who was encamped some eight miles to the rear.

He found that although no orders except the dispatch he had received had been issued directing a suspension of operations, General Grant was strongly impressed by the unfavorable condition of affairs resulting from the storm and the state of the roads and inclined to consider a suspension of operations necessary. General Sheridan, who in his last expedition had satisfied himself that troops could march, fight, and win battles under most disheartening conditions of weather, objected strongly to this course, urging that to fall back after so threatening an advance upon the enemy's position would have a bad

moral effect upon the troops, and would by the public be considered as a repulse, and that neither the army nor its general could afford to again be exposed to such criticism as followed General Burnside's unfortunate movement in 1863. That the roads were not impassable to those who were determined to advance was apparent from the fact that at this very moment his cavalry was engaged in active movements. These arguments were at last convincing, and General Grant concluded that the movement should proceed, and from that day on no backward step was taken and the campaign proceeded without a single check.

On returning to Dinwiddie Court House the cavalry reconnoissance toward Five Forks was still further pressed and the enemy driven within their line of works. It was clear that the position was strong and one that the enemy intended to hold, and, in addition to the cavalry force gathered there, it had been re-enforced by Pickett's division of infantry. These facts were reported to General Grant, and in reply he informed General Sheridan that, if he desired, the Fifth Corps should report to him to assist in an attack on these works. This offer was declined and a request made for the Sixth Corps, which had done such good service in the Shenandoah Valley; but that corps was occupying an important position in the line from which it could not at the time be removed, and pending the discussion of this question circumstances had changed and no infantry corps was sent for the time being.

On the morning of March 31st the First Division of cavalry and one brigade of the Second Division were in position on the Five Forks road, about two

miles in front of Dinwiddie, and two brigades of the Second Division were covering the crossings on Chamberlain's Creek, a small stream running north and south about a mile west of the Court House. The Third Division was still engaged in the uncongenial labor of dragging the trains through the miry roads along which the column had passed. The three divisions at this time had in their ranks nine thousand mounted and effective men, five thousand seven hundred of whom were in the First and Third, and three thousand three hundred in the Second. At Five Forks the enemy had continued to increase his force, and on this day had there five brigades of infantry under command of General Pickett with two divisions and a brigade of cavalry. To the great relief of all, the rain had ceased, and before the end of the day the roads had very perceptibly improved.

At an early hour orders to make reconnoissances preparatory to an attack on Five Forks were given, and General Merritt pushed out the First Division and the brigade he had of the Second in that direction, while the remainder of the Second Division guarded the crossings on Chamberlain's Creek. The advance toward Five Forks was slow, as the troops were obliged to advance dismounted through the heavy roads and almost impassable fields, and a strong skirmish line of the enemy disputed every foot of the way. While this movement was going on General Pickett determined on a flank attack on General Sheridan's force with his infantry and the greater part of his cavalry. After a sharp contest and a repulse of his cavalry he succeeded in crossing Chamberlain's Creek with his infantry, occupying

and driving back a brigade of the Second Division that for some time opposed him. Driving this force before him, he fell upon the flank of the troops advancing toward Five Forks, and three brigades were driven eastward and separated from the remainder of General Sheridan's command. These troops fell back fighting as they retired, and at last reached the Boydton plank road at a point about four miles north of the Court House and were there reformed, though in very poor condition for further resistance, as they had been while fighting dismounted separated from their led horses, which had been taken back toward the Court House, and the ammunition carried by the men on their persons had been nearly exhausted in the long struggle against heavy odds that they had sustained. It was now four o'clock in the afternoon, and the situation, which involved not only the separate command of General Sheridan, but the left flank of the whole army, was a critical one, as not only had the cavalry lines been cut, but the three brigades that had retreated to the Boydton plank road were the only force that protected the Fifth Corps from an attack.

The danger, however, was averted by prompt and vigorous action. The three brigades remaining that guarded the fords on Chamberlain's Creek and held the front of Dinwiddie Court House were quickly united, and as Pickett in advancing in pursuit of our defeated men had exposed his right flank and rear, a vigorous attack compelled him to halt and face to the right to meet this unexpected demonstration. As preparations were made for this movement orders were sent to General Custer to abandon temporarily his work with the trains and move rapidly



to Dinwiddie, which he reached with two brigades in time to render efficient service.

When the attack was made on his flank, Pickett ceased his movement toward the Boydton plank road and with his whole force turned to meet the new adversary he had encountered, thus abandoning all he had gained by his hitherto successful movement. His infantry force, largely outnumbering the troops with General Sheridan, gradually advanced toward Dinwiddie, though, as the ground was favorable for defense, our men, fighting dismounted and throwing up barricades at different points, fell back slowly and in good order, and time was given to select a line for defending the Court House. This was chosen on a commanding rise of ground about three quarters of a mile in front of the Court House, and the advance of General Custer's troops now reaching the ground, they took position on the left of the proposed line and at once began throwing up barricades. A little later the force that had been resisting Pickett's infantry fell slowly back and occupied their positions in the new line, and the artillery, which until this time had been slowly struggling to the front, at last reached our troops and was put in position. Finding that the Union lines had been strengthened and were now occupying a strong defensive line, General Pickett halted his infantry and reformed his lines for a general attack. It was now near sunset, and while the infantry was preparing for the assault the Confederate cavalry made a dash upon the left of our lines, but were met with a heavy fire from the breastworks, which at once stopped the movement and in a few moments drove them from the field, where they were no more seen during the day.



As sunset approached, the infantry lines, which by this time had been formed, were moved out from the woods and advanced for the final struggle of the day, but sufficient time had been given to complete the defensive works in front of the Union position and post the men and artillery to the best advantage.

As the enemy advanced, General Sheridan rode along the front of his lines, and his men, animated by his presence and encouraged by the success of their previous efforts, united in a ringing cheer. As the enemy approached on the open ground, our artillery poured on them a destructive fire, and a few moments later they were within reach of the carbines of the cavalry, many of whom were armed with repeating weapons, which were most effectively used. The enemy fought hard, and for a time kept up a heavy fire, but the losses were severe and the movement in advance could not be maintained. At dark the repulse was complete, the enemy fell back to a position beyond the reach of the Union arms, and there bivouacked for the night.

The close of this day put an end to one of the hardest and severest actions that the cavalry had ever been engaged in, and that tested to the fullest extent the skill and resources of the commander and the courage and endurance of the troops. The battle had continued from dawn until night, and during all these hours some part, if not all, of the force had been constantly engaged against largely superior numbers, among which were counted the choicest infantry of Lee's army, acting on ground peculiarly suitable for the operations of that arm and unfavorable for cavalry. Some severe reverses had been sustained with a considerable loss in killed and

cupied during the night and moved his troops on the road to Five Forks, closely pursued by the First and Third cavalry divisions, which were followed by one division of the Fifth Corps, which, moving down the Boydton plank road, had reached General Sheridan at the time the enemy commenced to retreat. Between seven and eight in the morning, as the cavalry were pressing on after Pickett's retreating column, the advance of the two divisions of the Fifth Corps that had been ordered to take position the night before in rear of the Confederates was met, of course too late to be of immediate use, and the whole plan of intercepting and defeating the exposed and isolated force of the enemy outside of the intrenchments had entirely failed, and in place of an attack by superior forces in selected positions in the open field it was now necessary to assault the strong and well-manned works at Five Forks, which were well supplied with artillery.

Greatly disappointed, but not discouraged, General Sheridan at once formed his plans to meet this new emergency, and, knowing the importance of the Five Forks as the key of the Confederate right wing, he determined at once to attack this point with his combined infantry and cavalry force. The First and Third cavalry divisions, under General Merritt, were therefore continued in the pursuit, and by two o'clock in the day had driven the enemy within his intrenchments. At one o'clock the Fifth Corps, which had been massed about two miles from the lines at Five Forks, was ordered to move up and take position on the right of the cavalry, the plan of attack being that the extreme left of the line should be held by the cavalry, who were to threaten the

right flank of the enemy and demonstrate vigorously, while the infantry was taking position on the right and forming its columns for assaulting the works. The lines being formed, the assault was to be commenced by an advance of the infantry, and the cavalry, on hearing the firing of the infantry, were to attack the lines in their front. The Second Division of cavalry was held in reserve and guarded the trains and the left flank and rear, and the cavalry division of General Mackenzie, from the Army of the James, which had been assigned temporarily to duty with General Sheridan, was placed on the right of the infantry line.

The cavalry on the left soon took up its position and began skirmishing with the enemy, but the Fifth Corps was slow to move, and three hours were consumed in marching two miles and making the necessary formations; and though frequent suggestions for more rapid movement were made to the commanding officer, it was not formed and ready to attack until four o'clock in the afternoon, and but two hours of daylight remained in which the coming battle must be fought. The Confederate intrenchments at Five Forks extended east and west along the White Oak road for some distance and on the left turned northwardly at a right angle, and the Fifth Corps was directed to assault this force, while the cavalry attacked the front on the road. The advance of the infantry was to be made to the White Oak road, when the two leading divisions were to wheel to the left and move down to the work to be attacked, while the Third Division moved in support of the other two. As the attack was made the division of General Ayres on the left of the Fifth Corps wheeled to

the left as ordered and promptly attacked the enemy's line; the division on the right did not, however, change direction, but continued moving northwardly, exposing the right of Ayres's line, and drawing after it the supporting division.

The enemy took advantage of the gap thus formed and succeeded in throwing part of General Ayres's division in confusion. This was remedied, however, by bringing into this interval the rear division of the corps, and a moment later the infantry charged over the works on the flank as the cavalry carried those of the front, and, without halting the infantry and dismounted cavalry, swept westward inside the line of intrenchments, driving the enemy beyond Five Forks and capturing all who did not seek safety in immediate flight. Two efforts to make a stand were attempted, but without success, and the enemy was driven in disorderly rout westward along the White Oak road until night put an end to the pursuit. A very great success had been obtained, and the force under Pickett was entirely broken up and routed, the strongest position on the right of the Confederate army had been captured, and six pieces of artillery, thirteen battle flags, and nearly six thousand prisoners fell into the hands of the Union troops.

While the battle had been gained, our troops occupied at its close a precarious position, for they were now remote from the left of the Army of the Potomac and within three miles of the present right of the Confederate army, which occupied an intrenched position at the intersection of the White Oak and Claiborne roads, directly in the rear of General Sheridan, as his troops were now formed. Apprehending an attack from this quarter during the night or early

the next morning, preparations were made for resistance, and, in view of the necessity of prompt and vigorous action, General Sheridan relieved General Warren, with whose conduct on the march and in the action he had become dissatisfied, and turned the command of the Fifth Corps over to General Griffin.

So much discussion has already been had upon this action of General Sheridan that it would be a needless waste of time to renew the subject in these pages. It is sufficient, in justification of General Sheridan, to say that before the battle he had received instructions from General Grant to relieve General Warren at any time such a course would be for the interests of the service, that his so doing was at the time approved by General Grant, and subsequently by General Sherman, who reviewed the proceedings of a court of inquiry held on this subject in after years, and that for the remainder of the time that the Fifth Corps continued under his command during the campaign he had no exception to take to the promptness, celerity, and vigor of its many movements.

General Grant, having learned on the night of April 1st of the success of the attack at Five Forks, had caused the Second Army Corps to extend its left toward the White Oak road, and one division—that of General Miles—was sent to General Sheridan, and joined him early in the morning of April 2d. Arrangements were at once made to advance on the enemy's works at the White Oak and Claiborne roads, and as our troops approached, the Confederates retreated, moving north on the Claiborne road and, after crossing Hatcher's Run, occupied a new position. An intended movement against this was frus-



trated by orders remanding the division of General Miles to the Second Corps. General Sheridan, with the Fifth Corps, then struck northward, and reached the South Side Railroad at Sutherland Station, cutting the only remaining railway that led from Petersburg, while General Merritt with his cavalry drove the enemy's mounted troops before him, and reached the railroad at Ford's Station, five miles west of Sutherland. The enemy on the retreat were overtaken at dusk, but continued to avoid a combat, and retired on the river road, which is parallel to and south of the Appomattox.

As soon as the lines at Five Forks had been stormed, it was clear that General Lee could no longer maintain himself at Petersburg and Richmond, and would be compelled to abandon those cities if he hoped to save his army. This necessity was as apparent to the Confederate commander as it was to his opponents, and he had already made preparations for this movement if such should by necessity be required. At daylight of the 2d of April a general assault was made by the infantry on the works that defended Petersburg, and after a severe conflict, and with considerable loss, some of the outer works were carried, though none were occupied that directly compelled the surrender or evacuation of the place. On the afternoon of the same day, however, Petersburg and Richmond were evacuated, and the Confederate army moved westward, south of the Appomattox River, directing its march to Amelia Court House, on the Richmond and Danville Railroad.

On the 3d of April General Sheridan, with his cavalry and the Fifth Corps, continued his march to



the west, closely following the cavalry of the enemy and such infantry as had accompanied it, and during the day hundreds of prisoners were taken, who were unable to keep up in the retreat, with five pieces of artillery and many wagons. At Deep Creek, just at dusk, the rear guard of the enemy turned and resisted the further advance of our troops until night put an end to the engagement.

Having foreseen that General Lee in his retreat would endeavor to reach Amelia Court House, where his separate columns coming from Petersburg and Richmond could unite, and where there was a possibility of his obtaining supplies by the railroad running through that place, General Sheridan determined, if possible, to gain a position that would place his force in advance and west of the Confederate army, and, holding the railroad, prevent any supplies being obtained, and he hoped to so delay the enemy that our infantry in the rear could have time to overtake the retreating forces.

Before daylight on the morning of the 4th the Second Division of cavalry and the Fifth Corps were sent forward on a forced march, and ordered to make every effort to reach Jetersville, a station on the Danville Railroad six miles southwest of Amelia Court House, and on gaining that place to hold the ground, no matter what force might be encountered. Making a detour to the left, to avoid interruption by the rear guard of the force that had been pursued on the previous day, these troops moved out, and, meeting no serious opposition, reached Jetersville at five o'clock in the afternoon, and were at once put in position across the railroad and intrenched as strongly as was possible. General Sheridan had de-

terminated to hold this point at all hazards until the main body of the army should come up, and had good reason to expect that Lee might be forced to surrender at Amelia Court House if these operations were promptly supported, as the Confederate army was now cut off from Burksville Junction and deprived of any source of supply so long as the position at Jetersville could be maintained.

General Sheridan, accompanied only by his escort, arrived at Jetersville in advance of his troops, and hardly had he reached the ground when a Confederate courier was captured, making his way to Burksville, on whose person the following telegram in duplicate was found, signed by the Confederate commissary general and addressed one to the Supply Department at Danville, and the other to that at Lynchburg: "The army is at Amelia Court House, short of provisions. Send three hundred thousand rations quickly to Burksville Junction."

As the telegraph lines west of Amelia Court House had been cut by our scouts and foraging parties, these dispatches had been forwarded by the messenger who was directed to send them from the first station he could reach whence communication could be had with Danville and Lynchburg. The dispatches, after their contents were ascertained, were delivered to two of the most reliable of the scouts at headquarters, who were instructed to ride westward to the first open telegraph station and send them forward with the expectation that was afterward realized that whatever supplies might be sent would fall into the hands of our advanced troops when opportunity of procuring regular issues of rations from the Union commissariat was exceedingly

slight while they were so constantly moving away from the depots.

This dispatch, and information gained from prisoners and scouts, proved that the supposition as to Lee's intentions which had been acted on was correct, and that as his previous experience had not taught him to expect so rapid and vigorous a pursuit, he was now concentrating his troops at Amelia Court House and calmly awaiting supplies, while a corps of infantry and a large cavalry force were already in his front and occupying the line on which he proposed to continue his retreat. Intelligence of these important facts was at once sent to the main army and to the other divisions of the cavalry. The cavalry sent for reached Jetersville the same night, but no more of the infantry of the Army of the Potomac arrived on the ground until three o'clock of the next day, when the Second Corps, followed by the Sixth, reached Jetersville. During the night the enemy was constantly feeling the lines and displaying signs of activity, and in the early morning of the 5th a force from General Crook's cavalry division was sent out to the left to ascertain what movements, if any, were being made, and gain information of the Confederate position. These troops, on reaching Paine's crossroads, about eight miles north of Jetersville, discovered the Confederate wagon trains moving westwardly through that place and at once attacked the escort by which they were protected. After a sharp contest the escort was driven off, losing many prisoners and five guns; an attempt was made to bring off the wagons, but, a new and heavier force coming up, this could not be done, and, the teams being cut loose, the wag-

ons were set on fire and destroyed. Among them, as was subsequently learned, were the headquarter wagons of General Lee, containing most of his records and official papers, and those of other Confederate officers of high rank. The reconnoitering force, though closely pursued by cavalry and infantry, returned to Jetersville, having destroyed two hundred wagons and bringing in the captured guns, a thousand prisoners, and the same number of mules taken from wagons that had been burned, as not being worth saving.

The information obtained by this reconnoissance and from other sources showed that General Lee had at last discovered the fact that his retreat had been cut off, and was endeavoring to pass around the left flank of General Sheridan's force, sending his trains in advance. This was further proved by a strong attack made by his cavalry on that of General Crook, evidently to cover this flank march, and a cavalry engagement commenced about twelve in the day that continued until night, in which the Second Division suffered severely. General Sheridan, who foresaw that if this movement on our left was allowed to proceed our army would again be in the rear and compelled once more to follow a flying enemy, was most anxious to attack as soon as the Second Corps came on the field; but General Meade, who had formed a plan of attack by which he intended to advance his right flank on Amelia Court House, objected to making any offensive movement until all his troops had been brought up, and thus the whole day was wasted in destructive and fruitless cavalry combats, while the main body of the Confederates was hurrying past the left flank of our

army and escaping from the almost fatal position it had occupied on the night before.

On the morning of April 6th General Meade, who had requested that the Fifth Corps be returned to him, adhering strictly to his plan of battle, marched his three corps of infantry east toward Amelia Court House, and after a march of four miles in that direction discovered that General Lee had improved the afternoon and night of the previous day in marching away from that dangerous position with all the speed to which he could incite his troops, and was then well out of reach, and all that remained for our infantry to do was to face about and follow the enemy in whose front they had stood the day before.

General Lee, who intended when he abandoned Petersburg and Richmond to proceed south as rapidly as possible on the line of the Richmond and Danville Railroad and unite his forces with those of Johnston, was obliged, in consequence of the new line of retreat that he was compelled to adopt, to leave the line of that railroad and march west across the country to Farmville, on the south bank of the Appomattox, a station on the Lynchburg Railroad, where he might possibly receive supplies, and whence a good turnpike road extended to Danville.

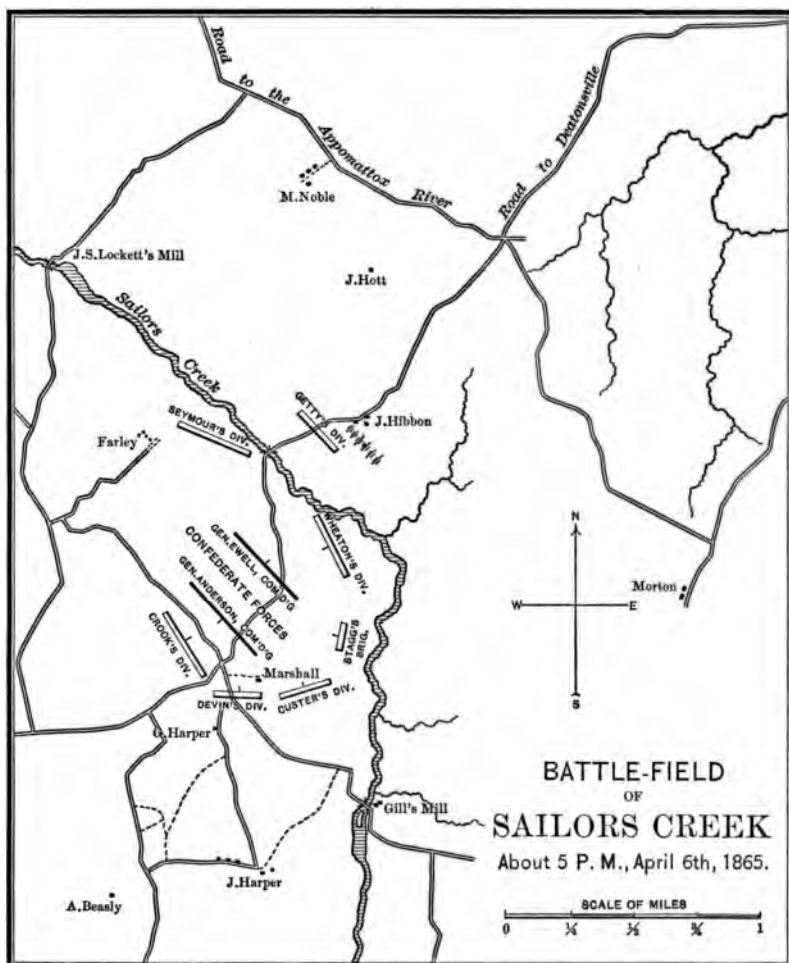
General Sheridan, who was well assured that Amelia Court House was not the place in which General Lee or any other Confederate soldier who still possessed the power to march would be found, started early with his three divisions of cavalry, and, taking a road parallel with the Confederate line of march, followed that for some hours, making continuous attacks upon the flanks, and dashes at the trains whenever opportunity offered. As one division



halted and formed for an attack the others passed in its rear, and then, pressing to the front, a new attack was made, and the whole Confederate line, both of combatants and of trains, was continuously forming to resist an unexpected enemy or seeking shelter from some new danger. These continued attacks and the wearied condition of the Confederates, who had been traveling the greater part of the night and who for several days had been suffering from want of food, made the march very slow, and gained time for our infantry to come up with the rear of the retreating column of the enemy.

At a point near Rice's Station a break was made in the Confederate line, and the cavalry destroyed several hundred wagons and captured sixteen guns and a large number of prisoners. This attack, of itself producing valuable results, was the more important as it interrupted the line of retreat and closed the road to Ewell's corps that was endeavoring to follow that of Longstreet, which had reached Rice's Station, and was then waiting for the troops in its rear to close up. At the same time a similar cavalry attack at the rear of Ewell's column had broken off his connection with that of Gordon, and had forced that officer to change the direction of his march and take a road to the right of that on which the other bodies of Confederate troops had marched. This separation of Ewell's corps from the troops in his front and rear gave opportunity for the battle of Sailor's Creek, which immediately followed. The cavalry commands of Generals Merritt and Crook were thrown beyond Sailor's Creek, a small stream running northwesterly that intersected the road to Rice's Station, and so formed as to hold that road.







Not wishing to delay his march by an engagement at this point, as it was now late in the afternoon, General Ewell posted Anderson's division in front of the cavalry lines on a rising ground and protected by barricades, intending that he should there hold the cavalry in his front, while the rest of the corps passing in his rear could, by taking roads through the woods, make its escape to Farmville. The cavalry at once attacked Anderson's position, General Crook assaulting in front with two dismounted and one mounted brigade, while General Merritt attacked on the right flank.

As this part of the engagement opened, the Sixth Corps, which had been ordered to report to General Sheridan, came up, and under his personal direction attacked the enemy's rear, which had not yet commenced its movement toward Farmville. The Confederates formed to meet this new enemy, and for a short time resisted with vigor the attack of the head of the column, and even made a countercharge on the left of our line that met with a momentary success. This was, however, at once driven back by the artillery of the Sixth Corps that had now reached the field, and our infantry pressed steadily forward. At the same time the cavalry attack on Anderson's front proved successful, and the different brigades, mounted and dismounted, as they had been formed, charged over the barricades. These simultaneous operations on the front and rear, so happily coinciding, entirely broke up Ewell's force, and nearly the whole corps surrendered on the field. General Anderson, with about two thousand men, succeeded in effecting an escape, but General Ewell, with six other general officers, about nine thousand rank and file, and what-

army of the enemy had crossed to the north bank of the Appomattox, General Sheridan at once perceived that Lee had abandoned all hope of escaping by the way of Danville, and was evidently intending to march on Lynchburg. It was again possible to throw the cavalry across this new line of retreat and delay the enemy until he could be overtaken by our infantry, and every effort was at once made to accomplish this purpose. Orders were sent to General Crook to recross the river at Farmville and march to Prospect Station, on the Lynchburg Railroad, six miles west of Farmville, and the cavalry at Prince Edward Court House moved in the same direction. At daylight on the morning of the 8th of April the whole cavalry force was brought together at Prospect Station, and at once took the road for Appomattox Station, on the Lynchburg Railroad, twenty-five miles to the west.

While on the march the general was informed by one of his scouts that at this station, which he had visited, were four trains of cars loaded with supplies for Lee's army which had been forwarded from Lynchburg in response to the telegram of the Confederate commissary general which had been captured at Jetersville on the 4th and afterward sent on to Lynchburg. So rapid and complete had been the series of disasters to the Confederate army that no accurate intelligence of its condition had been received at Lynchburg, and while it was there known to be in retreat and to have suffered reverses, no idea existed of its actual position or of the fact that any part of the Union army could be in its front. This scout, who had sent the dispatch and had ever since been on the watch for trains that might be sent in

compliance with it, had retained the original, and by showing this and representing the suffering condition of the Confederate army, which he said was on the march along the railroad, had persuaded the men in charge to bring the trains some distance east of the station and there remain until the arrival of the troops for whom they were intended. There was, of course, the chance of the true condition of affairs being learned at any moment, and General Custer, who was in advance, was directed to press forward as speedily as possible and effect this important capture. On nearing the station he sent two regiments at the gallop to circle round the trains to the south, and then, striking the railroad, to destroy the track sufficiently to prevent any movement of the cars westward. This was successfully done, and General Custer without trouble seized the trains and the railway station. Hardly had this been done when the advance of General Lee's army, eager with the hope of for once receiving an ample supply of rations, advanced upon the station, and, to their astonishment, were fiercely attacked by General Custer before they had become aware of the presence of an enemy.

After a spirited fight the Confederates were driven back in confusion on the road by which they had advanced, and their defeat was completed by the capture of twenty-five pieces of artillery and a large wagon train, which General Lee, profiting by his losses on the 6th, had now for greater security placed in the front of his army. The remainder of the cavalry force came rapidly up, and by night was strongly posted in the front of the Confederate army and held the last road by which it could have the

faintest hope of further retreat. The enemy was forced back to the vicinity of Appomattox Court House, and, to prevent rest or offensive demonstrations, continued skirmishing was kept up by our troops during the night.

For the second time during the pursuit General Sheridan had overtaken the retreating army, and, placing the force at his disposal directly in the front, stood as a bar to further progress. During the night he felt assured that his position could be held, but knew that after daylight his force would be insufficient to withstand the desperate assault he must expect from an enemy whose last and only hope remained in forcing a passage to the west. Everything depended upon the arrival of additional troops in time to resist the attack that would surely be made the following morning, and courier after courier was sent back to urge greater speed upon the commanders of the infantry, still far in the rear.

On the morning of the 8th the Twenty-fourth Corps had marched from Farmville and the Fifth from Prince Edward Court House, and, uniting at Prospect Station, had diligently followed the roads taken by the cavalry. Though for the past ten days they had fought hard, marched far, and fared poorly, the victories of those days and the knowledge that the adversary who for four long years had held them at bay, and at whose hands they had sustained toil, trial, suffering, and sometimes defeat, was now flying before them, inspired their courage and gave an endurance that no other source could have supplied. Through the day and through the long night that toilsome march continued, and just as day broke the welcome news was brought that the infantry col-



umns were within reach and would soon be on the ground to aid the cavalry.

During the night a consultation of the Confederate commanders was held, and it was arranged among them that in the morning an effort should be made to cut their way through the force in their front, which, as it then consisted of cavalry alone, it was thought would not be an impossible task. The remains of General Gordon's corps and the cavalry were selected to take the advance in this movement, and, these arrangements made, daylight was anxiously expected.

When the morning light of the 9th of April was sufficient to permit the movement of troops, the Confederate line advanced. Not caring to incur more loss than was absolutely needful, and learning that the infantry, which had just reached the ground, was forming in his rear, General Sheridan directed the cavalry lines to fall back slowly, skirmishing sufficiently to prevent a rapid advance by the enemy, and these orders being complied with, the enemy advanced confidently. The infantry formation being completed, General Sheridan ordered that two divisions of the cavalry be moved by the flank to the right, and at this movement the rebel lines cheered wildly and redoubled their fire, for to them it appeared that the troops opposing their march had been driven off, and that at last the road to Lynchburg lay open and clear before them. But for one instant did this exultation last, for as the cavalry disappeared from their front Lee's troops saw massed before them the heavy lines of two strong corps of infantry prepared for and waiting an attack. Not another sound was heard nor another shot fired; the advancing line

wavered, halted, and then, without an order given, faced about and fell back on the disorderly mass of Confederate troops that were huddled in confusion about Appomattox Court House.

Our infantry continued to advance, and the cavalry swept round to the right and was forming for a flank attack when the first signal of the Confederate surrender was made and a white flag sent into the cavalry lines, the bearer of which asked for a suspension of hostilities, as General Lee was then making arrangements for surrendering his entire army. In the absence of General Grant no definite arrangement could be made, but after some negotiations with Generals Longstreet and Gordon the troops were halted in commanding positions, and from that moment it may be said that the war had closed. The long pursuit had ended with the capture of all that was left to General Lee after a series of defeats and reverses of the powerful army that for four years had firmly held Virginia and had resisted the strongest and best of the Northern troops.

With the arrival of General Grant upon the field, which he reached about one o'clock, the final negotiations for the surrender were soon arranged; but as General Sheridan took no active part in these, and they have been frequently and fully described in other pages, there is no need to enlarge upon them here. The long pursuit which General Sheridan had advised, planned, directed, and led was closed with triumphant success when the white flag of surrender was displayed in the front of his advancing lines, and the mighty task he had assumed in the last days of March had been so thoroughly performed that nothing could be added to render it more complete or

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perfect, and on that night the Army of the Potomac, after four long and weary years of strife and toil, rested in peace, knowing that for them no foe existed against whose attack it was necessary to guard or with whom in the future it would be called on to contend.

## CHAPTER XII.

### COMMAND OF LOUISIANA AND TEXAS.—RECONSTRUCTION.—ADMINISTRATION OF CIVIL AFFAIRS.

THE surrender at Appomattox Court House closed the active operations of the Army of the Potomac and proved to be the actual, though possibly not the formal, termination of the civil war. A portion of the infantry force remained for a short time to complete the details of the surrender, while the other troops marched back to Petersburg. General Sheridan led his cavalry column to that city by easy marches, and after remaining there a few days received orders to march southward into North Carolina and aid General Sherman, who had been directed to continue active operations against General Johnston, whose offer to surrender his army had not proved acceptable. The troops which were placed under his orders for this movement were the three divisions of the cavalry corps and the Sixth Corps, which had been ordered to unite with him at Danville.

At this time no objection could be or was made to uniting with the army of General Sherman, for the Army of the Potomac had, unaided, accomplished the work to which from the commencement of the war it had been devoted, and was now well pleased to lend aid to its comrades of the West in place of

being dependent upon them for assistance, as had been suggested at the opening of the last campaign. A pleasant march of four days brought the cavalry corps which General Sheridan led to the border of North Carolina, and there the news was received that General Johnston had accepted the inevitable and surrendered his army upon the same terms which had been granted to General Lee. This rendered the presence of additional troops unnecessary; the cavalry returned to Petersburg, and thence marched by easy stages to Washington, where the Army of the Potomac and that of General Sherman were brought together to be reviewed by the President before their disbandment. General Sheridan went by water from Petersburg to Washington to await the arrival of his troops, but was to his lasting regret prevented from ever again meeting the men who on many fields had followed him so faithfully and served him so gallantly.

By May 15, 1865, all organized bodies of Confederate troops had surrendered or had been disbanded with the exception of a considerable force still remaining in western Louisiana and in the State of Texas under the command of General Kirby Smith. These troops had occupied the territory of the State of Texas since the beginning of the war, and their remote position had not permitted them to see much hard service or given them an opportunity to appreciate the strength and force of the Northern army when actively exerted. Their numbers had been increased by many refugees from the other armies, who had determined that death in the last ditch was preferable to a surrender to the Northern invader, and had consequently fled to Texas, as may be supposed, to find the means of fulfilling their purpose. The

commander of this force had loudly and at great length proclaimed the unsubdued condition of his army and of the State of Texas, and expressed in the usual terms his intention of continuing the conflict for independence and Southern rights so long as one man survived to resist those who should dare to assail those sacred institutions.

General Sheridan was selected as the person best fitted to extend the blessings of peace to this still rebellious section of the country, and on May 17th he received orders to assume command of all the territory west of the Mississippi that was still held by Confederate troops. He was instructed "that his duty was to restore Texas and that part of Louisiana held by the enemy to the Union in the shortest practicable time in a way most effectual for securing permanent peace."

He was not trammelled with specific instructions, but was told that if General Smith continued to resist our forces without even an ostensible government to which he was responsible, he and his men were not to be regarded as legitimate belligerents, but as outlaws; that if an immediate surrender was offered these men could receive the same terms as those accorded to Lee and Johnston, but in that event only. Further instructions as to the operations in the event of an active campaign were given, and a force of fifty thousand men was placed under his orders, to be used as required.

General Sheridan inquired if these orders were so pressing as to demand his immediate departure for his new command, which would prevent his presence with the troops that had lately served under him at the review of the Army of the Potomac, which had



been ordered for May 23, 1865, as he had a strong desire to be present on this last occasion in which they would appear together. He was told by General Grant that it was of great importance that he should assume his new duties immediately. In the first place, to enforce the surrender of the recalcitrant Confederates and to organize the territory over which he was placed in command in such a manner that he could control the management of all civil affairs until Congress took some action for restoring the States lately in rebellion.

At the same time General Grant mentioned that an additional motive existed for creating this new command besides those mentioned directly in the instructions, and this resulted from the occupation of Mexico by a French army and the present subjection of that country to the Emperor Maximilian by the aid of foreign troops. He went on to say that he had always regarded the invasion of Mexico as a subordinate feature in the rebellion itself, as it had been encouraged and abetted by the Southern Confederacy, and that in his judgment a complete success in putting down the rebellion would not be accomplished until Mexico was freed from foreign control and restored to its original position as a republic. It was a well-known fact that many defeated Southern leaders and soldiers looked to Mexico as a place of refuge, and that they had been invited and were welcomed to join the party of the Emperor and support his authority by arms; and if this condition of affairs was continued there was a prospect that for an indefinite period a large force of armed and hostile rebels would be maintained in the southern boundaries of the United States which would be a

source of much trouble and annoyance, if not of danger to our Government.

It was therefore necessary to prevent the passage of armed Southerners into Mexico who had not in good faith surrendered, and to maintain on the boundary a considerable force that would serve not only to protect our own territory, but have some moral effect in encouraging those Mexicans who were still struggling to maintain their national independence. These reasons were, of course, controlling, and General Sheridan at once left Washington to assume his new duties. While traveling by steamer from St. Louis to New Orleans he received intelligence that General Kirby Smith had reconsidered his determination to remain forever unconquered, and had surrendered his command to General Canby upon the same terms that had been extended to the other Confederate armies.

This surrender, though proposed by the Confederate commander, was not carried out in good faith, particularly by the Texas troops, who were permitted by their officers to disband without complying with the obligations they had bound themselves to observe, and several organized bodies of these men marched to the interior of the State, carrying with them their camp equipage, arms, ammunition, and some artillery, with the design of reaching Mexico and there joining the Imperial army. Their leader evaded our troops and fled to Mexico, but the main part of a scheme that had been formed previous to the surrender of organizing a column of fifteen thousand men for the invasion of Mexico failed, though numerous detached parties of Confederate soldiers, numbering in all about four thousand, found their

way into Mexico, and, having fought for four years to establish an independent Southern republic in the territory of the Union, devoted what of combative energy still remained to them in the effort to impose a despotic and imperial government upon the republic of Mexico.

While the troops were being collected that were intended to act in Texas, a singular incident recalled to General Sheridan the campaign in which he began his operations in the Shenandoah Valley. Some of his cavalry while crossing to the west bank of the Mississippi below Vicksburg observed a suspicious-looking party of men crossing the river in a row-boat and leading two horses. Some of the troopers gave chase and succeeded in capturing the horses, but failed to secure the men, who were possibly not very actively pursued, for while Confederate horses yet maintained a value, the supply of prisoners was far in excess of the demand, and in those days they were little sought for. It was afterward learned that the fugitives were General Early and two or three companions, and that the general, having successfully effected a masterly retreat from Waynesborough to the banks of the Mississippi, was on his way to join the Confederate troops in Texas, of whose surrender he had not been informed. Some days afterward General Sheridan received from him a letter referring to the affair and the capture of the horses, for which he demanded pay, they being, as he asserted, his private property, as they had been taken in battle from the United States forces in his former aggressive days. This was the final and last appearance of General Early in the history of the civil war, and there is no record that the claim he



so modestly urged has ever been acknowledged and paid by the United States Treasury.

Two columns of cavalry, each about five thousand strong, were sent, the one to Austin and the other to San Antonio, and a corps of infantry was placed at San Antonio and another at Brownsville, on the Rio Grande River, opposite the Mexican town of Matamoras, which was then held by the Imperial troops. From this point the line of the Rio Grande was patrolled to prevent the escape of Confederate soldiers into Mexico, and the force was from time to time increased as greater facilities for supplying it could be furnished.

In June General Sheridan visited the troops in camp at Brownsville, and while much activity was displayed in preventing Confederate soldiers from crossing the frontier into Mexico, a demand was made upon the Imperial general commanding on this line for the return of Confederate war material that should at the time of Smith's surrender have been delivered to the representatives of the United States, but which had been carried to Mexico and turned over to the invading army in that country.

This act of the Imperial forces and the constant harboring of enemies of the United States, in the opinions of Generals Grant and Sheridan, were a sufficient reason for crossing the frontier and intervening in the Mexican struggle, but the artillery that had been spirited away was returned with profuse apologies, and the interference of the Department of State, which insisted upon a settlement of all questions in dispute by diplomatic negotiation, prevented any active movements by our troops. Later in the summer preparations were again made that bore the

appearance of an intended movement by our army to cross the Rio Grande into Mexico, but renewed interference by the State Department at the request of the French minister prevented any action.

Affairs on the Mexican border continued much in this condition until the early part of 1867. Our people on the border and the troops sympathized strongly with the Republican party in Mexico, but were not permitted to afford active assistance. Efforts of bands of Confederate adventurers to cross into Mexico were frustrated, and the party of independence was strengthened in tone and feeling by the presence of the force that was kept on the border, and if union and good feeling could have always prevailed among the Mexican leaders the contest in that country would not have continued so long as it did. The insistence by our State Department upon a strict neutrality on the part of the United States gave some confidence to the Imperialists, and also tended to prolong the struggle. In the summer of 1866 the Republican forces, which had succeeded in obtaining considerable supplies of arms and ammunition from the United States, became sufficiently strong to undertake aggressive operations in the northern part of the country, and gradually drove the Imperial troops to the south and east. In January, 1867, as was learned at General Sheridan's headquarters through an intercepted telegram, the Emperor of France ordered that his troops should evacuate the Mexican territory. The Emperor Maximilian was thus abandoned in the country he had invaded, with no force to depend on but a few Mexicans who remained faithful to his cause. The small force that stood by him was soon defeated, and the

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well-armed nation, flushed with a recent triumph in one of the greatest wars that history records, the character of whose institutions and the traditions of whose people were utterly opposed to such a government as had been established in Mexico, or to foreign intervention of any nature with the domestic affairs of any part of the North American continent, there was but one result of this invasion to be looked for, and the attempt to maintain it for a single day after the breaking up of the rebellion became a useless sacrifice of life and treasure.

The labors of General Sheridan in his new command were not confined to the direction of military affairs and the protection and control of the Mexican frontier, but, in the inevitable state of confusion and absence of all regular and effective civil power that resulted from the sudden breaking up of the Confederate Government, and the condition in which the territory that had lately been subject to its rule was placed by that event, it became necessary that he should assume a supervision, and at times a direct control, of the action of such provisional authorities as were permitted for the time being to have jurisdiction of civil affairs until a settled form of administration could be legally provided.

Throughout the Southern States at this time it was difficult to find any reliable class or body of citizens to whom the direction of civil affairs or the responsibilities of forming and carrying on a government that would conform to the laws and Constitution of the United States and afford freedom, equality, and justice to all citizens could be intrusted, The citizens of intelligence, character, and means. and those who by past experience and the customs



prevailing in the South had been familiar with the responsibilities of maintaining an organized civil government, had almost universally taken part in the rebellion and had forfeited their civil rights, which could only be restored by accepting the conditions imposed by the Amnesty Proclamation of President Johnson, issued on May 29, 1865.

This was, however, so framed that citizens of influence, education, or means, who under ordinary circumstances would have been prominent in a community organized according to law and recognized social customs, were excluded from the benefits it extended. The few whites who could be found through the Southern States who professed to have been loyal to the Union throughout the war, and who claimed that their rights of citizenship had not been forfeited, were generally men without character or influence and unworthy of respect or confidence. In the majority of instances their fidelity to the United States and freedom from any connection with Confederate interests resulted from the fact that for the reasons given it had been out of their power to obtain office or position of any kind from fellow-citizens by whom they were generally distrusted. The negroes, who formed the third of the incongruous elements from which civilized governments were to be constructed, had been just released from slavery, were entirely illiterate, and for the time possessed no greater conception of the rights, duties, and obligations of a citizen in a free and self-governed state than the dumb cattle with which they had labored in the fields.

From these widely differing classes of resident population—to which a fourth may be added, com-

posed of Northern men who soon began to settle in the Southern States, some for purposes of business and attracted by the prospects that a comparatively new community offered to the enterprising and adventurous, and others who expected to obtain political power and preferment in the general overthrow that had destroyed the institutions of the past and excluded former leaders from the control of public affairs—were now communities to be formed and systems of political government organized that of necessity must differ widely from any that had previously existed there. The various methods attempted or adopted to this end, and the difficulties encountered in the slow progress of events which finally after great effort and incidentally much suffering, form an interesting chapter in the political history of the country, but will be referred to briefly only so far as particular events were connected with or controlled by General Sheridan in the discharge of his duties as military commander.

The command to which General Sheridan was assigned in 1865, after the close of active military operations in the East, was designated as "The Military Division of the Gulf," and contained within its limits the States of Louisiana, Texas, and Florida. The latter of these States, which was thinly settled and remote from the centers of political activity, presented no question of difficulty or importance, and was, soon after the creation of the military division, removed from the command of General Sheridan, and his authority, so far as it bore upon the questions of reconstruction of State governments and military control of the population, was confined to the territories of Louisiana and Texas. The State of Texas

did not at first present any serious questions or call for more than the exercise of sufficient military power to repress occasional local disturbances or repress individual instances of wrong or oppression of the blacks when the civil authorities were too weak to perform this duty.

The Governor of the State who was in office at the time of the breaking up of the Confederate States had assumed that his powers as Governor still continued, and with the aid of the existing Legislature had assumed to undertake a reconstruction of the State government, and had called for the election of delegates to a State convention to be convened for that object, who were to be selected by all inhabitants of the State who had theretofore enjoyed the right of suffrage. This assumption of authority was determined by the arrival in the State of a provisional Governor, A. J. Hamilton, appointed by the President, who, supported by the military power, took control of the government and put an end to exercise of executive power by the former Governor and prohibited the assembling of the convention he had called. This action and his subsequent public acts in preparing for a reconstruction of the State government, in which none should take part who were not qualified to vote under the Amnesty Proclamation, caused much discontent and serious opposition was threatened; but the Governor, who was an energetic and courageous man, persevered in the course he had determined on and called on the military authorities for support. This was granted, and, sufficient troops being available, detachments were placed at every point where trouble was feared. This display of force, which was recognized to be sufficient to re-

press any attempt at an outbreak, preserved peace throughout the State, and no riots or disturbances of any moment occurred during the administration of Governor Hamilton, which continued until August, 1866. At that time a new Governor and other State officials assumed office, who had been elected under the authority of a convention which had been called by Governor Hamilton, and the President, who by this time had greatly changed the views with which on his accession to power he had regarded those who had been in armed rebellion against the United States, was prevailed upon to direct that the military authorities should no longer take any part in the control of civil affairs, and that these should be left to the sole direction of the newly elected State officials. The results of this change of policy were soon apparent in the passage and enforcement of laws favoring the former rebel element and oppressive to the blacks and those who had been prominent as loyal citizens and supporters of the previous administration, and the military power being now checked by the orders of the President, a long period of disturbance and oppression followed, that continued until Congress in the year 1867, through the reconstruction laws, assumed the duty of controlling and reducing to order the seceded States and restored to the military power authority to act in cases where the laws of the United States were resisted or not observed.

The State of Louisiana was the most difficult and trying to control and that portion of his command which called upon General Sheridan for the exercise of his fullest powers and presented questions of the most importance. Many causes combined for this condition: The State was one of the most populous of the



South, and before the war one of the most wealthy and enterprising; the city of New Orleans was the largest in the Southern country, and its inhabitants had always been largely interested in public affairs and an important element in the political control of the State; the country had been much exposed to the ravages of the war; a general disturbance of social relations occurred from the breaking up of homes and the necessary changes in life and habits that followed. The constant presence and movements of troops through the State had disturbed the relations of the negroes with their masters, and many who had escaped from slavery were idle and vagrant, with no occupation or habits of industry that would assist in providing for their own support; and these, as well as those who remained upon the plantations at the close of the war, were the most ignorant and uncultivated of the blacks throughout the South, having been for the most part employed in agricultural labor on large plantations, where they were worked in large gangs and had little or no opportunity of development by association or intercourse with the whites.

The city of New Orleans contained at this time a population that for venality and want of principle could not be equaled in any other part of the country. Since the month of April, 1862, it had been in the possession of our armies, and had so continued under the successive administrations of Generals Butler, Banks, and Hurlburt until the close of the war, and had not been the scene of any active military operations. During this period of comparative quiet large numbers of speculators, camp followers, traders, smugglers, blockade runners, gamblers, and

adventurers of all kinds had been attracted to the place, to whom the opportunities afforded for dealing in Government supplies, furnishing contraband goods to the enemy, bringing from within the rebel lines the accumulated crops of cotton and sugar, for which no other market existed, and the plunder derived from the numerous confiscations of the property of wealthy Confederates, offered a rich harvest.

When the sudden close of the war put an end to the methods by which these men had existed and prospered, their attention was turned to the political field as the remaining opportunity through which they could hope to live without labor and continue to thrive upon public plunder, and in the further troubles of the State many of them were conspicuous as officeholders and as influential directors in political troubles and controversies.

The political difficulties in Louisiana were further complicated by the existence of an irregular though recognized government which had been established under the sanction of President Lincoln, in 1864, through a convention called in that year, the proceedings of which had been ratified by the votes of so-called loyal citizens in those portions of the State that at the time were subject to the military power of the United States. This existing system of civil government, having already been recognized by the highest authority, could not be disregarded, and was suffered to continue for the time being, and, having power to hold elections and distribute offices, soon fell into hands that used it in the interests of those who had been interested in or taken part with the Southern Confederacy, who, being the most numerous, were the party whose votes and influence were



of the greatest value to those who sought to control public affairs.

By the early part of the year 1866 the Legislature and most of the State and municipal offices were occupied by or controlled by men who were known to be devoted to the interests of those who had been recently engaged in the rebellion, and determined to protect their interests and keep them in power as the ruling party in the State. A system of legislation was inaugurated that would carry out this policy, and that was also directed to the purpose of restricting the rights of the freed blacks and of reducing them again to a condition of actual, if not nominal servitude, and that was productive of many risings, outrages, and murders that were perpetrated against this class of the community. It was also evident that among those who now controlled public affairs there was a violent prejudice against Northern men and all who were known to have been in the past loyal to the United States or who were now disposed to oppose a State government that was controlled by the rebel element and carried on exclusively in that interest.

The State Convention of 1864, by which the existing government was created, had at the time of adjournment provided for future meetings to be called by its president, if such should be needed to secure the formation of a civil government in Louisiana, and this Convention was thus called to meet on July 30th, at the city of New Orleans, and this action was recognized and sanctioned by the Governor in a public proclamation. The public officials and the party in power were strongly opposed to the reassembling of this Convention, and it was denounced as illegal and revolutionary by the press and some

officers of the courts, and by the time fixed for the meeting a bitter feeling of hostility to those engaged in the movement prevailed.

General Sheridan had taken no part in this proposed action of the old Convention, either by counsel, advice, or consent; and in this, as in all other political affairs, had carefully abstained from any personal participation, and his feeling concerning it and the course he proposed to take, if any proceedings were had that would injuriously affect public affairs, is shown in the report he made of the circumstances that attended and followed the meeting.

On the 30th of July, the day fixed for holding the Convention, some thirty of the members assembled, a number insufficient for a quorum, and no action of any kind was taken. The meeting, which was held in a public building of the city, was attended by a number of colored men as spectators, who had been led to expect from it some relief from the hardships they suffered under. In the early part of the day the civil authorities had conferred with General Baird, who was temporarily in command of the city, General Sheridan at the time being absent, as he was returning from Texas, where he had been called by affairs on the Rio Grande.

Fears were expressed that the meeting of the Convention would cause public excitement, and might result in tumult or riot. General Baird expressed his willingness to put down any disturbance of the public peace, and had troops prepared to act as soon as the mayor or other municipal officers should request assistance. No call was made for military aid, but in the course of the day a disturbance occurred between the police and some ne-

groes assembled in front of the building when the Convention was in session, which soon resulted in an attack by the armed police and white citizens upon the Convention itself, and those who were present at the meeting. A savage riot followed, and two hundred persons were killed and wounded, some of whom were members of the Convention, and other unarmed spectators. This riot, which the civil authorities made no attempt to repress, was put down by troops which were brought to the scene of conflict, and General Baird immediately proclaimed martial law and placed the city under military control. General Sheridan reached the city on the 1st of August and, upon investigation, ascertained the facts and approved the action of General Baird, reporting the circumstances to General Grant in the following dispatch :

“ HEADQUARTERS, MILITARY DIVISION OF THE GULF,

“ NEW ORLEANS, LA., *August 1, 1866.*

“ *General U. S. Grant.*

“ You are doubtless aware of the serious riot which occurred in this city on the 30th. A political body styling themselves the Convention of 1864 met on the 30th for, as it is alleged, the purpose of remodeling the present constitution of the State. The leaders were political agitators and revolutionary men, and the action of the Convention was liable to produce breaches of the public peace. [I had made up my mind to arrest the head men if the proceedings of the Convention were calculated to disturb the tranquillity of the department, but I had no cause for action until they committed the overt act. In the meantime official duty called me to Texas, and the

mayor of the city during my absence suppressed the Convention by the use of the police force, and in so doing attacked the members of the Convention and a party of two hundred negroes with firearms, clubs, and knives in a manner so unnecessary and atrocious as to compel me to say it was murder.] About forty whites and blacks were thus killed, and about one hundred and sixty wounded. Everything is now quiet, but I deem it best to maintain a military supremacy in the city for a few days, until the affair is fully investigated. I believe the sentiment of the general community is great regret at this unnecessary cruelty, and that the police could have made any arrest they saw fit without sacrificing lives.

"P. H. SHERIDAN,  
*Major General Commanding.*"

This dispatch was submitted by General Grant to the President, and as public attention at the North had been called to this riot in a Southern city, and much feeling had been excited, a general demand was made through the press for the publication of the official dispatches that related to the affair. This the President professed to comply with, and furnished to the press a portion of the dispatch of General Sheridan, which has been cited, but excluded those paragraphs which in the full dispatch as here copied are included between brackets.

The important facts were thus omitted that General Sheridan had determined to break up the Convention and arrest the leaders if any acts were committed that tended to disturb the peace; that General Sheridan was absent from New Orleans upon necessary official duty at the time the Convention



met and the riot occurred ; and the description of the action of the mayor and the conduct of the men who directly participated in the outrage.

General Sheridan strongly protested against this mutilation of his official report, which was found to have been made through the personal direction of the President, and insisted upon the publication of the dispatch in complete form, which was at last reluctantly conceded, and from this circumstance, in his judgment, the personal hostility which President Johnson on all occasions afterward plainly manifested arose.

The action of General Sheridan was approved at the time, and on the 3d of August he received from General Grant, pursuant to the direction of the President, a dispatch instructing him to continue to enforce martial law so far as necessary to preserve the peace, and not to allow any of the civil authorities to act if he deemed such action dangerous to the public safety ; also to fully investigate and report the causes that led to the riot, and the facts which had occurred.

On the 4th of August the President personally requested a full report of all that related to the causes of the riot and the circumstances attending it, and General Sheridan replied on the 6th in a dispatch which gave a full account of the meeting of the Convention, the circumstances preceding the riot, and all that occurred during its progress. In conclusion, referring to the causes that provoked the outbreak and the existing condition of affairs, he said :

“ The immediate cause of this terrible affair was the assemblage of this Convention ; the remote cause

was the bitter and antagonistic feeling which has been growing in this community since the advent of the present mayor, who in the organization of his police force selected many desperate men and many of them known murderers. People of clear views were overawed by want of confidence in the mayor and fear of the thugs, many of which he had selected for his police force. I have frequently been spoken to by prominent citizens on this subject, and have heard them express fear and want of confidence in Mayor Monroe. Ever since the intimation of this last convention movement I must condemn the course of several of the city papers for supporting by their articles the bitter feeling of bad men. As to the merciless manner in which the convention was broken up I feel obliged to confess strong repugnance.

"It is useless to disguise the hostility that exists on the part of a great many here toward Northern men, and this unfortunate affair has so precipitated matters that there is now a test of what shall be the status of Northern men—whether they can live here without being in constant dread or not, whether they can be protected in life and property and have justice in the courts. If this matter is permitted to pass over without a thorough and determined prosecution of those engaged in it, we may look out for frequent scenes of the same kind not only here, but in other places. No steps have as yet been taken by the civil authorities to arrest citizens who were engaged in this massacre or policemen who perpetrated such cruelties. The members of the Convention have been indicted by the grand jury, and many of them arrested and held to bail. As to whether the



civil authorities can mete out ample justice to the guilty parties on both sides, I must say it is my opinion unequivocally that they can not. Judge Abell, whose course I have closely watched for nearly a year, I now consider one of the most dangerous men that we have here to the peace and quiet of the city. The leading men of the Convention—King, Cutler, Hahn, and others—have been political agitators and are bad men. I regret to say that the course of Governor Wells has been vacillating, and that during the late trouble he has shown very little of the man."

The receipt of this dispatch was mentioned by the Secretary of War, who on the 7th of August sent by telegraph the following communication:

"The President directs me to acknowledge your telegram of the sixth (6th) in answer to his inquiries of the fourth (4th) instant. On the third (3d) instant instructions were sent you by General Grant in conformity with the President's directions, authorizing you to 'continue to enforce martial law so far as might be necessary to preserve the public peace, and ordering you not to allow any of the civil authorities to act if you deem such action dangerous to the public safety, and also that no time be lost in investigating the causes that led to the riot and the facts which occurred.' By these instructions the President designed to invest in you, as the chief military commander, full authority for the maintenance of the public peace and safety, as he does not see that anything more is needed pending the investigation with which you are intrusted; but if in your judgment your powers are inadequate to preserve the peace

until the facts connected with the riot are ascertained, you will please report to this department for the information of the President."

It thus appears that all the acts of General Sheridan in connection with the events that followed the riot were not only directed by the President himself and approved by him, but that General Sheridan was invited to suggest if further power should be given to enable him to preserve the public peace. The suspension of officials who had been connected with the outrage either by inciting or failing to put it down and the declaration of martial law throughout the city, which were subsequently by the President and his supporters asserted to be an unwarrantable and tyrannical exercise of military power, as will be seen, were approved at the time and authorized by the official chief to whom supreme control of the conduct of military officers is committed.

While at first satisfied that his action had been in accord with the intentions and policy of the President, General Sheridan had reason soon to learn that he could not depend upon good faith or genuine support, and that at the time he was receiving these expressions of confidence and approval measures were already contemplated to impair his authority and place him in the position of exercising illegal powers and making an unjustifiable use of the forces confided to him. The first evidence of this appeared in the excision of the most important parts of the dispatch of August 1st, which was given to the public in such form that the material facts stated which made the exercise of military power a necessity were not presented.

It was soon after learned that the President was

in personal correspondence with the leaders of the disloyal faction and receiving from them and crediting statements that were prejudicial to the good faith and propriety of conduct of the officer in whom he affected to place confidence and intrust with absolute power to repress disorder and maintain the public peace. All this was soon publicly known when in the latter part of August the President began a tour through the Northern States and in a series of speeches, delivered in the principal cities that he visited, openly declared the policy that he had been secretly maturing for the reconstruction of the seceded States. This, as he announced, was a restoration of these States to the Union under the same conditions that existed before they had rebelled, without any provisions to insure the safety or rights of citizenship of the enfranchised slaves or protection to the lives and property of those who had remained loyal to their country during the war. He declared that the existing troubles in the Southern States were due to the action of Congress in continuing sectional differences that the war had settled, and to the oppressive and unwarranted powers exercised by military commanders through the South.

From this time General Sheridan was much embarrassed in the administration of the affairs of his division. He received at all times the approval and cordial support of General Grant, but the persons who so long had opposed him in the States of Texas and Louisiana, and who had done all in their power to continue disloyal feeling and incite resistance to the authorities of the United States, were well received by the President and recognized as his advisers in the affairs of those States, and, so far as possi-

ble, supported in their schemes and maintained in office by his authority.

A committee of Congress, appointed for that purpose, subsequently investigated the subjects of the riot, and the action of General Sheridan with regard to it, and verified the correctness of the reports he made and fully approved the action he took. In their report the committee said :

“ That the meeting of July 30th was a meeting of quiet citizens, who came together without arms, and with intent peaceably to discuss questions of public concern. . . . There has been no occasion in our national history when a riot has occurred so destitute of justifiable cause, resulting in a massacre so inhuman and fiendlike, as that which took place at New Orleans on the 30th of July last. This riotous attack upon the Convention, with its terrible results of massacre and murder, was not an accident. It was the determined purpose of the mayor of the city of New Orleans to break up this Convention by armed force.” The committee also reported that no legal government existed in Louisiana, and recommended that a provisional government be established, saying that “ in the meantime the safety of all Union men within the State demands that such government be formed for their protection, for the well-being of the nation, and the permanent peace of the republic.”

The position taken by the President and the recognition and support he began at this time to afford to the representatives of the disloyal element in the Southern States had caused at the North great apprehension of renewed disturbance in the South, and had encouraged resistance and disobedience to law in much of the conquered territory.

pensions previously made for such cause, this power, however, to be exercised subject to the approval of the general commanding the army, and to extend the periods fixed in the first act as those in which registration must be accomplished if they should consider such action advisable.

The States of Louisiana and Texas were designated as the Fifth Military District, and General Sheridan was placed in command. From this time he was able to proceed in the discharge of his duties with less embarrassment and more freedom than in the past. An election of municipal officers had been arranged to take place in New Orleans on the 11th of March, but such well-grounded reasons for apprehending riot and disturbance if it were allowed to occur existed that orders were given that it be postponed, and it consequently did not occur.

In assuming his command under these new laws, General Sheridan announced his intention of not interfering with the provisional State governments as they existed or with their administrations except in such matters as were directly placed under his control by the recent legislation, and in cases where absolute necessity required his action to prevent the commission of wrong or to secure rights which the present authorities would not protect.

Such necessities arose from time to time, and the removal of the mayor of New Orleans, the Attorney-General of the State, and one of the judges of the district court was effected, these officials having pronounced the Reconstruction Laws unconstitutional, and advised resistance to them. In addition to this, their conduct in connection with the riot of the past July had shown them to be unworthy of confidence,



and unfit to occupy any position of trust where loyalty to the Government and respect for law were necessary qualifications. The reasons for these removals were asked for by the President through General Grant, and were given in detail and were found satisfactory by the latter. The President did not approve, but he had not the courage, in face of the facts presented, to rescind the step that had been taken. He was aware of the fact that the removal of these men from office was commended by the better class of the community, and that they had no defense to the charges of misconduct made against them, for he was kept well informed of affairs in Louisiana and Texas and of every act of General Sheridan by persons in those States, some of whom were open and active supporters of the presidential policy, and others who were employed and acted as spies. So thoroughly and secretly was this work performed that frequently the President received information of official acts in the Fifth Military District before the regular reports had reached the headquarters of General Grant. From the time of the passage of the Reconstruction Laws General Sheridan was able to administer successfully the affairs of his district, and from that period, so long as he continued in command, no further instance of armed resistance to the law occurred, or of attempts to control political offices by violence.

The boards of registration for the enrollment of voters to elect delegates to the constitutional conventions called for by the new laws were selected, all the members of which were required to be men of unquestioned loyalty, and their proper action and full compliance with the instructions under which



they acted was secured by the supervision of officers of the army.

For some time past the negroes had been subject to many wrongs and outrages, and the public sentiment that had been encouraged by the apparent prospect of a return to political power of the men who had been active in inciting and carrying on the rebellion was such that it was not possible for a negro to obtain justice in a civil court, or to punish a white man for any offense, no matter how grave, committed against a black. The trial and punishment of a few offenders of this class by military commissions soon put a stop to crimes of this description, and the civil rights of the colored race were thereafter respected.

The police force of New Orleans had been craftily organized under the law of 1866, by which it was created, in such manner as to exclude from appointment to membership of the force any persons who had not been for the past five years residents of that city, and thus few or none were eligible but those who had been in the service of, or in sympathy with, the Southern Confederacy. This system was broken up, and under that which took its place about one half of the members of the new force were selected from men who had served in the Union army and had since settled in the city. Officials who neglected or refused to properly perform their duties were removed, and their successors selected from those who could be depended on for loyalty and faithful service—among others, the Governors of Louisiana and Texas.

The action of General Sheridan in enforcing the Reconstruction Laws, providing for the safety of

those under his control, securing the due administration of justice, and removing dishonest and unfaithful officials, was throughout approved by General Grant, his immediate superior, but displeasing in the extreme to the President, whose individual policy and efforts to extend his personal power and influence in opposition to the laws as passed by Congress were seriously affected by these measures. He could, however, openly manifest his displeasure with an officer who obeyed the law, or revoke the action that had been taken, as he had been advised by one of his own trusted supporters, who was maintained at New Orleans to keep watch upon the official conduct of the district commander, that the character of the principal officials who had been removed was too bad to justify an attempt at their reinstatement.

There remained, however, to the President, as commander in chief of the army, the power to assign officers to command at his pleasure, and he therefore determined to exercise this; and, without giving any reason for his action, he informed General Grant of his intention to relieve General Sheridan from command of the Fifth Military District, and to assign him to duty in the Department of the Missouri.

Against this proposed change General Grant protested strongly, and at length, when invited, as he was by the President, to make any suggestion he might deem necessary respecting this subject, in the remarks he made observed: ". . . I am pleased to avail myself of this invitation to urge—earnestly urge—urge in the name of a patriotic people who have sacrificed hundreds of thousands of loyal lives and thousands of millions of treasure to preserve the integrity and union of this country—that this

order be not insisted on. It is unmistakably the expressed wish of the country that General Sheridan should not be removed from his present command. This is a republic, where the will of the people is the law of the land. I beg that their voice may be heard. General Sheridan has performed his civil duties faithfully and intelligently. His removal will only be regarded as an effort to defeat the laws of Congress. It will be interpreted by the unreconstructed element in the South—those who did all they could to break up this Government by arms, and now wish to be the only element consulted as to the method of restoring order—as a triumph. It will embolden them to renewed opposition to the will of the loyal masses, believing they have the Executive with them.”

This earnest and vigorous expression of confidence and approval, given by the chief under whom General Sheridan had immediately served and by whom his every important action had been ratified, and these pressing reasons for his retention in the command he had exercised, important alike to present and future public interests, urged by the man who at that time stood first in the esteem and confidence of the people, and who was so soon to occupy the highest office in the land, had no effect upon the mind of the President. On the 26th of August the proposed change was made, and General Hancock was assigned to command the Fifth Military District and General Sheridan to the Department of the Missouri.

Apart from the natural disappointment that is felt by every earnest man at being interrupted in the full completion of an important duty to which his best thoughts and energies have long been de-

## CHAPTER XIII.

DEPARTMENT OF THE MISSOURI.—INDIAN CAMPAIGN.—LIEUTENANT GENERAL.—FRANCO-PRUSSIAN WAR.—COMMANDER IN CHIEF.—DEATH.

IN the beginning of September, 1867, General Sheridan left New Orleans and repaired to the command to which he had been assigned—the Department of the Missouri—headquarters of which were at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and which included the States of Missouri and Kansas, the Indian Territory, and New Mexico. In the past two or three years, while no actual hostilities had existed, there had been constant trouble with Indians in this territory, small parties of the savages attacking isolated settlements and making raids upon parties engaged in laying out and constructing the Pacific Railroad.

At the time General Sheridan assumed command these troubles had for the moment ceased and the Government was engaged, through the medium of a Peace Commission, in pacifying the hostile tribes by offers of rations, annuities, and other bribes which might incline them to refrain from active war against the people of the United States. While a treaty was pending, and a prospect of gain held out to the Indians, there was no reason to expect from them any hostile movement; and as the winter was

coming on, in which the savages never attempt offensive action, General Sheridan took the opportunity of enjoying the second leave of absence from active duty that he had taken since graduating from West Point, in 1853.

He spent the time from October, 1867, until the following spring in taking rest and in visiting different parts of his own country with which he was yet unacquainted. He was everywhere received with the greatest kindness and hospitality, and, though he declined to receive any public demonstration of welcome, became personally known to the best citizens in all the places he visited, and also by the people of the country, as one of the great leaders in the civil war. A pleasant season of rest and recreation was thus passed, and in March, 1868, he returned to Fort Leavenworth and again assumed command of his department.

The Peace Commission had concluded its work and a treaty had been made with the hostile Indians, duly executed, which bound them to perpetual peace with the white men, to permit settlements in territory previously used as Indian reservations, and to allow the construction of the Pacific railroads through their country. These treaties and arguments had been, in the usual course, made with the chiefs and head men of the several tribes, but in the following spring of 1868 it was found that the young men and warriors were strongly opposed to the agreements made, and claimed that they had been procured by personal bribes offered to those unworthy chiefs by whom they had been signed.

General Sheridan in his early years of service had had some experience with Indians on the Pacific

coast, but was now brought in contact with thousands of a new and different class. These, being nearer to civilization and possessing the power of being more annoying to the progress of settlement and development of the western country, had for many years been bribed, flattered, and petted by that department of the national Government that is charged with the conduct of their affairs until they believed their will supreme, and that whatever they asked for would be granted.

In this condition of Indian affairs General Sheridan returned to his command in March, 1868, and soon found that the work of the Peace Commission had been of no effect, and that he must expect Indian hostilities throughout his whole command. The Indian chiefs who sought to confer with him said that they had been deceived in signing the treaty they had made, and had never understandingly agreed to the stipulations it contained.

With these statements of course he could not agree, and could do nothing but insist that the treaty as it existed should be fully complied with. This treaty, which was known as that of Medicine Lodge, provided that the Indian tribes with whom it had been concluded should consent to unrestricted settlement by the whites of the country between the Arkansas and Platte Rivers, should not interfere with the construction of the Pacific railroads through the same territory, and that the Indians themselves should thenceforward occupy reservations in the Indian Territory south of the Arkansas River which had been designated for their use. In return for these concessions the Government was to furnish arms, ammunition, and supplies, and to pay certain



sums as annuities toward the support of the several tribes of Indians.

The savages had been collected about Forts Dodge and Larned, whence it was expected they would proceed during the summer to their reservations in the Indian Territory; but as the season advanced it became evident that they had no intention of complying with the treaty and were only awaiting a favorable opportunity for an outbreak.

As many settlers had already established themselves in middle and western Kansas who were greatly exposed in the event of an Indian war, and as it was of great importance that work on the Pacific railroads should progress without interruption, General Sheridan, while refusing to hold any council with the chiefs or to enter upon any formal negotiations with them, endeavored by temporizing and persuasion to retain sufficient control to prevent hostilities. For this purpose he furnished an abundant supply of rations and used the services of white men who as scouts or interpreters had for many years lived on the plains in constant communication with the Indians and who knew and had the confidence of the principal chiefs and head men. These measures and the expectation of receiving the arms, ammunition, and annuities provided for in the treaty for some time secured quiet, but early in August small bands of Indians appeared in different parts of the Territory and committed fearful atrocities upon isolated settlements. The encampments of the tribes about the forts were broken up and the Indians moved away to new locations north of the Arkansas River instead of proceeding to the new reservations in the Indian Territory, which under the treaty they had accepted.

From these circumstances it was evident that the Indians had openly refused compliance with the agreements they had made and that a general outbreak was to be expected which could only be quelled by forcibly compelling the different tribes to occupy and remain on the reservations selected for them by the treaty of Medicine Lodge. To accomplish this was a difficult task and many serious obstacles were to be overcome, and General Sheridan soon decided that methods hitherto unused in Indian warfare must be adopted.

The savages to whom he was opposed could bring into the field a force of about six thousand warriors and had at their disposal in which to operate a vast region of country extending from the Platte River in Nebraska to the Red River in the Indian Territory, through any part of which they could move freely either for attack or for retreat, and in the summer and fall, when these plains were covered with herds of buffalo and well furnished with grass, all supplies for their subsistence were abundant. They had large herds of ponies to mount the warriors and transport the women and children and their tepees and other property, and, through traders and the bounty of the Government, were well provided with arms and ammunition.

In view of these facts, General Sheridan determined to confine his operations during the grazing and hunting season to protecting the people of the new settlements and those on overland routes, and to begin his active campaign after the winter had set in, at which time the savages would be settled in their villages, and their ponies being thin and weak from want of grazing and little game to be had, they

would be incapable of active or effective movement and readily overtaken by our troops. Pursuant to these plans, headquarters were established at Fort Hays, Kansas, then on the extreme western line of settlement and the terminus of the Pacific Railroad, a desirable point for establishing a depot for supplies and from which communications could be maintained with the other posts in the command. The whole force at General Sheridan's orders east of New Mexico and available for the protection of the settlements and the intended active operations was but two thousand six hundred men at the commencement of this campaign, and about twelve hundred were added to this force by the time the troops took the field against the red men.

The labor of procuring supplies and providing sufficient transportation for even this small force was great, as food, forage, and ammunition were required for a campaign of six months that was to be pursued in a country destitute of all resources for the supply of civilized man, extending over great distances through regions destitute of roads and where everything must be transported by wagons; but the commanding general devoted himself with energy to the task, and by November his preparations were made and proved sufficient for the purpose. Before this it was learned that the hostile Indians had virtually abandoned active movement for the season and that the greater number had moved southward and had established themselves in their winter villages, which were scattered through the northwestern corner of the Indian Territory or in that vicinity, the nearest more than two hundred miles from any position held by the United States

forces, and had settled down for a winter's repose, which they had no reason from previous experience to believe would be disturbed.

By the 1st of November preparations were completed and the different bodies of troops were moving, the main column, which General Sheridan intended to accompany, being ordered to unite at a point subsequently known as Camp Supply, some two hundred miles south of Fort Hays, while two smaller forces moved on the same point from posts in Colorado and New Mexico.

On the 15th of November General Sheridan left Fort Hays and proceeded southward to Camp Supply, which was reached after a very trying journey of six days, during which storms of snow and sleet prevailed and at times winds so severe that tents could not be erected. At this point a portion of the troops he expected to meet were found, but one regiment of about one thousand men—the Nineteenth Kansas Cavalry, which in numbers comprised nearly one half his effective force—had not appeared and no intelligence of any kind concerning it could be obtained.

Notwithstanding this disappointment, the troops were too near the enemy to remain inactive and to allow opportunity for their escape. General Custer, commanding the Seventh Cavalry, was at once dispatched to follow up a trail that had been discovered and that evidently led to a large Indian encampment. This expedition was successfully carried on during a heavy snowstorm, and at daybreak on the 27th of November the village was attacked and, after a severe struggle—in which many Indians, including their chief, "Black Kettle," were killed—was captured



and destroyed, the survivors flying in confusion and losing an immense herd of ponies, their most valuable possession, the loss of which rendered them incapable of further hostile movements. General Custer returned with his command to Camp Supply, but further movements were delayed until tidings were obtained of the missing Kansas regiment, which was at last found at a distance of some fifty miles, having lost the direction in which it should have marched, being entirely without supplies. Nothing can better illustrate the severity of the weather during these operations than the fact that more than eight hundred of the horses of this regiment perished from cold and want of forage, and that the men were thus compelled during the remainder of the campaign to serve on foot.

From this time on no engagement of any consequence occurred with the hostile Indians, though a few conflicts of minor importance took place from time to time. The Indians were overwhelmed with alarm at the severe loss they had suffered at the beginning of the campaign, and demoralized by attacks made upon them at a season when they were entirely unprepared for war and unable to carry it on in the manner to which they had been accustomed.

The troops moved through the Indian country suffering greatly from the severity of the weather and occasional privations from want of supplies, but everywhere with success. Whenever they approached an Indian village in any force it was abandoned and the inhabitants took flight, and, encumbered as they were with women, children, and household goods, and the ponies being unprovided with forage and consequently too weak for work, they suffered great-

ly and sustained heavy loss. Their spirits were soon broken by these hardships, and from time to time different bands came in and offered to submit to such terms as should be imposed. This continued until the spring, and before May all the tribes that in the past year had been engaged in hostilities had been gathered in and peaceably located on their assigned reservations in the Indian Territory.

General Sheridan did not personally conduct this campaign to its conclusion, as he received a dispatch from General Grant on the 2d of March directing him to report immediately at Washington. On reaching that city he received the commission of lieutenant general of the army, to which office he had been appointed March 4, 1869, the day of the inauguration of General Grant as President. The President offered to him, and indeed desired that he should re-assume command at New Orleans in charge of the Fifth Military District, from which he had been removed by President Johnson. To this duty, however, he had no inclination, greatly preferring a command which would be exclusively of a military character, and he was therefore assigned to the Division of the Missouri, succeeding General William T. Sherman, who had been promoted as general in chief.

This large command embraced the region east of the Rocky Mountains and west of the Mississippi River from the British possessions on the north to the State of Arkansas and the Indian Territory on the south, and was continuously held by General Sheridan from the date of his assignment to it until he assumed the command of the army upon the retirement of General Sherman; and fixing his head-



quarters in Chicago, he resided in that city while in charge of the division.

While engaged in a tour of inspection of his command in the spring of 1870, General Sheridan learned of the probability of war between France and Prussia, and, desiring to witness the operations of European armies, he returned to Chicago and applied for leave to go abroad for this purpose, which was freely granted, and he at once prepared for his journey. He had occasion to visit General Grant before sailing, and received from him a warm commendation to the good offices of all representatives of our Government in foreign countries, and authority to remain absent for such a period as he should find desirable, unless orders for his return should be issued.

When asked by the President which one of the contending armies he intended to visit, he replied that it was his wish to be with that of the Germans, as in view of his belief they would be successful; he knew that more could be obtained and learned by following the movements and witnessing the operations of the victorious side. This opinion, and one in which the President concurred, was not that of Americans at that day, as the general opinion was favorable to French success—a judgment possibly founded to some extent on the prestige of the name of Napoleon and the French success against Austria in the Italian war of 1859.

It was well for General Sheridan's object in this journey that his intention of repairing directly to Germany was formed at this early date, for, as he subsequently learned, the Minister of the United States at Paris, having unofficially heard of his intention to visit Europe, and thinking it possible he

might wish to see the war from the French side, had applied for the necessary authority. This, however, was met with such evident intention to finally refuse the request that the matter was not pressed, and such a result was to be expected, as the French military authorities have always shown a reluctance to allow any examination of the conduct or movements of their armies by foreign officers. It may be remembered that during the Crimean War a commission of officers of our army, of which General (then Captain) McClellan was a member, was sent by the Government to Sebastopol; and while courteously received by the English authorities, was not permitted to enter the French camps, or allowed to obtain any information concerning their troops.

General Sheridan, taking with him Colonel James W. Forsyth, of his staff, sailed from New York in the latter part of July and passed through England to Brussels, which he left for Cologne on the 9th of August. Arrangements had been made by the American Minister at Berlin that he should proceed directly from Cologne to the headquarters of the German army, but by some mistake of the officials in charge of the railroads, which were then under military control, these were not carried out, and he was compelled to make the long journey to Berlin and return from that city before the object of his journey could be attained. These delays were such that he did not reach headquarters, which were found at Pont-à-Mousson, until the 17th of August, the day preceding the battle of Gravelotte. During the evening he was presented to Count Bismarck, who received him with great courtesy and attention, and promised that he should have every facility to fully accomplish his

purpose of carefully observing the operations of the German armies.

On the morning of the 18th he accompanied the Count in his carriage to the front, and on the field was presented to the King of Prussia, who welcomed him cordially, and invited him to accompany his headquarters throughout the campaign. General Sheridan remarked, with some surprise, that even while oppressed with the anxieties that naturally attend the approach of an important engagement both the King and his Chancellor appeared to be much interested in the public opinion that prevailed in the United States concerning the existing war, and which side was there held responsible for provoking it. The beginning of the action soon interrupted their discussion, and for the remainder of the day General Sheridan was fully occupied in observing the movements of the opposing armies and the skillful tactics that resulted in the German success. From this time on General Sheridan accompanied the headquarters of the German army, receiving from the King and his highest officials every courtesy and attention. He was present at the battles of Beaumont and Sedan, and, after the latter, saw the defeated Emperor of France arriving from that city to surrender his army and himself, and was a witness of the first interview between him and Count Bismarck, who had been deputed to open negotiations. From Sedan, General Sheridan was with the German army on its unopposed march to Paris, and remained with it until the investment of the city was completed. He examined the various works as they were constructed, and had the opportunity of witnessing the repulse of several attacks made by the

French upon the besieging army; but, finding that future operations would be confined to a protracted siege of the city, determined to occupy the time at his disposal in a tour of Europe, returning to Paris at such time as the German army should resume active movements.

He therefore made through the winter an extended journey, visiting Belgium, Austria, Hungary, and closing his journey eastward at Constantinople. In all these countries he was received with great attention and hospitality, was entertained by the highest in rank, and afforded every opportunity of gratifying the inclinations and wishes of a distinguished and welcome guest. At Constantinople a review of the Turkish troops was tendered him, and he speaks of them as in appearance and physique equaling any soldiers he had observed.

Returning through Greece and Italy, at Florence, which was then the capital of the recently created Kingdom of Italy, he was presented to King Victor Emmanuel, who was greatly interested in hearing of the large game to be found in North America, and particularly of the buffalo on the Western plains, and who complained greatly that his royal position would forever prevent his having the opportunity of enjoying such sport as the country of his guest afforded. He extended an invitation to a hunting party on one of his estates, where extensive preserves of game were kept. This General Sheridan gladly accepted, but found neither the game nor the methods of hunting there adopted much to his taste as a sportsman who had been accustomed to consider skill, labor, and sometimes danger, as necessary to the full enjoyment of this sport; and after shoot-



ing a few half-tame deer that had been driven up to the muzzle of his gun, he ended his hunt and returned to Florence. He returned to Paris in time to witness the surrender of the city and the formal occupation of it by the German army, and then took leave of his German friends, who were returning as conquerors to their homes.

In summarizing his observations upon what he had seen of foreign armies and warfare, General Sheridan speaks highly of the discipline, physique, *moral*, and equipment of the German troops. He had, of course, no opportunity of comparing the French with them in these respects, but their inferiority to their adversaries from the very beginning of the struggle shows them to have been over-matched. Of the cavalry he saw little, and it was only once engaged during the battles he witnessed, when at Gravelotte a division of cavalry was made to charge against a strong position held by French infantry, protected by stone walls, houses, and a sunken road, and was of course repulsed with great loss, though exhibiting great bravery, dash, and discipline. He considered the organization of the cavalry, however, as defective, as it did not, as with us, form an independent corps capable of individual action, but was broken up in small commands, none larger than a division, and primarily occupied in guarding the front and flanks of the different bodies of infantry to which it was attached. In these respects the French cavalry system was even more defective than the German and of no actual value whatever. He was well satisfied that if the French had collected and maintained a large and independent corps of cavalry under a capable leader the Germans could not have

made their rapid and unopposed march upon Paris, nor could they have so peaceably maintained, in the heart of a hostile country and at a distance from their base, the lines they held around the city.

The excellent roads, abundant supplies, and opportunity for sheltering troops everywhere found in a country so thickly settled as France, permitted rapid movements and long marches that in a country such as ours would be impossible, and almost eliminated the question of transportation that was frequently a controlling element in the movements of American armies. He saw no new military principles developed either of strategy or grand tactics, the movements which he observed being governed by the same laws that have long prevailed. General Sheridan left Paris before the outbreak of the Commune, and, after passing through England, Scotland, and Ireland, returned to America in the summer of 1871, having in his year's absence accomplished a tour that for variety, interest, and incident has been rarely if ever equaled.

Returning to Chicago, he resumed charge of his military division, and was in that city at the time of the disastrous fire by which a considerable portion was destroyed. While his private residence escaped, the military headquarters building was burned, and with it the records, journals, and maps that he had collected for the purpose of describing and illustrating the part he had borne in the civil war. Many of these could not be replaced, and it was only by great labor, patience, and care that he was able to obtain sufficient of this material upon which to construct the Personal Memoirs which he prepared in the later years of his life.



The career of an American soldier who has attained high rank offers little matter of public interest or which properly belongs to history during peaceful times. The administrative duties which limit his sphere of activity, while of importance to the service and to those directly interested in their proper execution, can display no striking incident or call for marked attention. Indeed, it may be said that such duties are best performed when no public interest is attached to them, and that the best and most efficient officers are frequently those of whom the least is heard.

By a career such as this was the remainder of General Sheridan's life occupied. The vast extent of country which was included in his command required frequent and extended journeys to allow of his giving proper attention to the condition of the different posts and garrisons, to learn from personal inspection the character of the country and the measures to be adopted for the best interests of the settlers who were in ever-increasing numbers occupying it, and the preservation of quiet and peace among the large numbers of barbarous and roving Indians, from whom hostilities must ever be expected and guarded against.

These expeditions gave occupation to him both of body and mind, and also opportunity for indulging the taste for hunting, which he had formed in his early days in the plains of Texas and the hills of Oregon. He was an excellent shot and an untiring, vigilant, observing hunter, and enjoyed no pleasure more highly than a severe and successful chase after game whose capture required the exertion of skill, labor, and courage. Whenever it was possible he in-

vited friends to accompany him on these expeditions, and many of them to-day have no pleasanter memories than of happy days passed in hunting with him on the plains of Kansas or the Rocky Mountain hills and of nights passed about the camp fires when resting after these heavy toils.

He cordially remembered and maintained the friendships that had been formed during the days of his active service in the field, and every friend and comrade who had shared in the perils of the war was sure to receive from him a cordial welcome and, in case of need, to command his services and help. He took pleasure in keeping up these associations, and was an interested and welcome guest at all the meetings and reunions of the soldiers of the civil war which it was within his power to attend.

In 1876 occurred the outbreak of the Sioux Indians in Montana, and General Sheridan was called on to assume a duty that was most trying to a soldier of his personal vigor and energy—that of directing and supervising to some extent a campaign fought by soldiers of his own command in which the necessities of his position forbade him to take an active part. Beyond general directions to officers commanding in the field it was impossible for him to act, and for the first time his soldiers fought without the inspiration of his personal presence. A great disaster marked the opening of the campaign, but all knew it was not incurred through the orders or directions of the commanding general; and from that time on, through a long, arduous, and severe campaign, the forces of the Government succeeded. Before winter the hostiles were completely overcome, and the survivors, surrendering their arms and

horses, were driven in to their reservations, where they have since remained subdued and quiet.

While residing in Chicago, General Sheridan met and married in the year 1875 the daughter of General Rucker, afterward Quartermaster General. At his pleasant home in that city grew up about him the interesting family to which he was fondly attached and which mourns his loss. Sheridan left four children; three girls and a boy—the youngest—who was born in July, 1880, and bears his famous father's name.

In February, 1884, General Sherman had attained the age of sixty-four years, and, though still in vigor of life, was obliged, under the laws that make that age the limit of active service in the army, to go upon the retired list. Lieutenant-General Sheridan was called to succeed him in command of the army; but this important change of duty and responsibility brought with it no increase of rank, as the law which had created in the army the grade of general provided that that office should lapse upon the death or retirement of General Sherman. His new duties required that his headquarters and residence should from that time forth be fixed in Washington, and to that city he removed with great regret, abandoning his pleasant home in Chicago, the first he had known since his boyhood, where he had lived for fifteen years with a large circle of attached friends, where he had met and won his wife, and where his children had first seen the light.

This, however, he accepted as he had done all other trials and hardships that inevitably attach to a soldier's life, and entered upon his new duties with the same energy and interest that he had displayed in all the varied positions he had occupied. He

soon established a pleasant home in Washington, and there found congenial friends and a social life that is to a man engaged in public affairs the most agreeable that our country affords, and here the remainder of his life was passed.

Those who knew him best were not slow to perceive that his new duties were not so congenial, nor did they afford him the same interest and occupation that he had found in his former sphere of duty. Though an apparent anomaly, it is, notwithstanding, the fact that the highest position in the army of the United States is that in which the duties, responsibilities, and powers are in time of peace fewer and of less importance than those confided to many officers of a lower rank and the least suited to a man who has been accustomed to exercise personal command and whose habits and instincts are purely those of the soldier. This may be largely accounted for by the fact that the administration of army affairs at the seat of Government is confided to different bureaus, which are independent of the general in chief and subordinate to no direct authority but that of the Secretary of War, and still more to the instinctive and ever-existing jealousy of military power that at all periods of our history except those of imminent peril has animated the men who have controlled the administration of public affairs. But of this no one ever heard General Sheridan complain, and he faithfully and diligently devoted his time and labor to whatever work fell in his way to do, and did it thoroughly and well.

He greatly missed the warm and closer association with fellow-officers and troops that his present position involved, and, above all, the long excur-

sions, the hunting parties, and the opportunities for exercise and camp life that he enjoyed while commanding the Division of Missouri. The change of climate from the cool and bracing air of the Northwest to that of Washington seriously affected his health, and in a few years symptoms of the illness that ultimately proved fatal appeared. But none of these depressing circumstances impaired the cheerfulness and kindliness of his disposition, his mental vigor, or his indomitable energy, and to the very close he exhibited to the world the same enduring and unconquerable character he had ever displayed. He collated and prepared for publication while at Washington the two volumes of his *Personal Memoirs* which have so modestly told the story of his active life as a soldier, and to the regret of all his friends have left reserved what relates to his later life. Thus occupied, his last days passed, until suddenly the blow that had been so long threatened fell upon and prostrated him. His immense vitality and undaunted courage rendered the struggle between life and death long and painful, but at last he was vanquished and yielded to the foe to which all men must at last submit.

The Legislature of his country, mindful at last of great services when his life was but a question of days, conferred upon him the rank of the office he had held, and when death came it was to General Philip H. Sheridan, commanding the army of the United States. This great loss to his country occurred at Nonquitt, Massachusetts—where he had gone with his family in July, with the hope of improving his failing health—on August 5, 1888, when he had attained the age of fifty-seven, and in the

ordinary course of events could have looked forward to many more years in which he could peacefully repose from the labors of his early days; but the exposure, fatigue, and cares of his active career, it was found, had made serious inroads upon a frame and constitution which had always depended more upon mental vigor and activity than upon physical strength, and which had been thus laid open to the attacks of disease.

His funeral took place at Washington, where his last home had been and his last work accomplished. Every tribute of honor and respect that the national capital and the rulers of the country could extend was paid to his memory, and no soldier was ever laid to rest around whose grave were gathered more friends who came to testify to their personal regard and devotion. For a soldier no more appropriate grave could have been chosen than that where he reposes in the beautiful cemetery at Arlington, Virginia, within sight of the nation's capital, and on the banks of the river that gave a name to the army with which his fame is most nearly allied, surrounded by, and the chief of, thousands of brave and gallant men who in life loved and served their country, and the memory of whom is loved and honored by that country for the welfare of which they died.



## CHAPTER XIV.

### CHARACTER AND PERSONAL TRAITS.

IN reviewing the life and career of General Sheridan, two circumstances strongly arrest the attention of those who examine the subject with any degree of attention, and these are the rapid, continuous, and unvarying success that marked every step of his progress during those years of the civil war in which he exercised the different commands that were successively committed to his charge, and the fact that through the same period, from its beginning to the close, he was entirely unaided by the help or assistance of friends who might be able to aid or influence his advancement or present his claims for promotion or high command to those by whom such distinctions could be conferred.

His continued service in the army from the time he left West Point, and constant duty at remote posts beyond the limits of civilization, had, of course, prohibited him from forming any friendships with men in civil life who possessed position, influence, or the power of aiding his promotion; nor did he while serving in Texas and Oregon meet or become associated with any officers who then or subsequently held high rank and who could have aided a deserving comrade by recommending him for promotion or affording

him opportunities for service through which he could gain distinction. From early youth he had been absent from his home in Ohio, and the few acquaintances and kindred he there possessed had neither the power nor the opportunity to further his prospects.

At the outbreak of the civil war there were probably few officers in the army whose chances of obtaining high command and future distinction were so remote as those of the solitary and friendless young second lieutenant of foot then occupying a lonely and remote post in Oregon. His subsequent promotion to a captaincy in a yet unorganized regiment of infantry, and his detail and efficient service as an officer of the supply departments, were again obstacles to his obtaining an opportunity for that active service in the field which he so much desired and for which he proved so well fitted; and the strong objection made by General Halleck to his acceptance of the first active command that was offered him shows both his value as a staff officer and the narrow escape he had from remaining permanently on such service during the war.

His appointment as colonel of the Second Michigan Cavalry may be termed the one accident of General Sheridan's military life, as he never knew to what circumstances it was due; he had made no application for the position, he knew nothing of the regiment or the officers, and possessed no friends or acquaintances whom he could have supposed had recommended his appointment to the Governor by whom it was conferred. Accidental as it may have been, this opening afforded a future, and, eagerly embracing it, Sheridan began the career the coming steps in which were gained by arduous service that

fairly won for him every successive honor that he subsequently attained. The command of this regiment was also the only position to obtain which he made any personal effort, as all his future assignments to higher duties were made by superior officers without his solicitation, and in few cases did he know that any such were contemplated before they reached him.

A striking feature in his character, and one that must have largely contributed to his success, was the intensity and earnestness with which he devoted himself to whatever duty might be that in which he was immediately engaged and the unflagging industry and perseverance that he gave to it until fully accomplished. In all the varied phases of his life this was most apparent, and in the Indian combats of 1868, after he had commanded armies in civilized warfare and administered the affairs of large territories, he is found in the field conducting a winter's campaign at the head of a few hundred troopers with the same energy and interest that he displayed as a young lieutenant in his first Indian campaign in Oregon, or as a general commanding an army in Virginia.

He was not an ambitious man in the sense in which that word is frequently used to signify one who aims at or performs great deeds with the wish or hope that from them personal distinction, honor, or advancement may result, but his aim and constant purpose was to do thoroughly and completely the work he found before him for the time being, whatever that work might be and regardless of what effect it might have upon his personal fortunes. The rule that had controlled his action during life he ex-

pressed on one of the very few occasions when he publicly spoke of himself or his career, when at a reunion of the Army of the Cumberland, in an address then made, he had been complimented upon his brilliant record and reference was made to the high and far-reaching ambition that must have inspired him in the beginning of his military life and directed him to the great success he had obtained. In reply he entirely disclaimed that he had been controlled by such a motive or had considered the question of what results personally advantageous to himself would follow his conduct, but said that in all the various positions he had held, some of which he admitted were in the early days of the war unsatisfactory and distasteful, his sole and only aim had always been to be the best officer in the grade he might at the time be occupying, and let the future take care of itself.

Those who knew him best and were most intimately associated with him during his active career well remember these marked traits of his character, and it was noted that he seldom if ever spoke of the past, and never of the future, as connected with his personal interests or as subjects of reflection, but that his mind was ever intent upon the present and the work then in hand. That fidelity to duty and the best interests of the service in which he was engaged was his controlling motive appears in some conspicuous instances of his career, where this quality was exhibited in a manner that apparently worked injury to his personal interests. When, soon after the breaking out of the war, he was relieved from duty in Oregon and had the opportunity of going to the East, where active service was to be found

and the prospect of promotion and distinction existed, he found that the officer who was ordered to relieve him in command of the post he occupied was unworthy of trust and confidence by reason of sympathy with the rebellion, he refused to surrender the command or the property in his charge, and remained inactive for more than three months, until a suitable successor to him could be found.

In February, 1865, knowing that a great struggle about Petersburg and Richmond was approaching, he voluntarily abandoned the command of a territorial division and of an independent army, and with two divisions of cavalry made his way to the Army of the Potomac, where he felt that he and his troops could be of the greatest value. In command at New Orleans he remained true to his own convictions of duty and the orders of his immediate superior, in spite of the offers of favor or threats of punishment that alternately were used to win him over to support designs the President had formed concerning the course to be pursued by him, and rather than surrender his convictions of what he believed to be right, preferred to be relieved of an important and honorable command.

As a soldier, General Sheridan possessed to an eminent degree the qualities that are indispensable in a commander who is called on to lead troops to battle, and who has the right to expect success and victory. He had the ability to think and act promptly and energetically, and, if need were, independently of instructions, and to assume and support with ease whatever responsibilities his situation might require; he had the power to impress his will and personal influence upon all who were under his command.

He was not a martinet, nor what would be called a rigid disciplinarian, though he exacted and obtained of all under his command, from the highest to the lowest, implicit obedience to orders, and not only a prompt, but an energetic performance of duty; and his mind was broad enough to perceive that in the exigencies of active service and the constantly changing emergencies of a campaign a wider scope of action is required than can be found in the directions of a manual of tactics or obtained from the experience of a drill ground. He also fully recognized the reciprocal relations that should ever exist between a commander and his troops, and that while the former has the right to demand implicit obedience and thorough performance of every duty, he is bound to take every care to secure the health, welfare, and comfort of those over whom he is placed; and knowing that abundant supplies, occupation, and success are all requisite to render soldiers healthy, contented, confident, and zealous, he used every exertion to provide these for his men, and seldom if ever failed in so doing.

Early in the war he realized the necessity and value of obtaining all possible information of the positions, forces, and movements of any enemy to whom he might be opposed, and gave great personal attention to this object, often selecting, and always, when possible, conferring directly with the men employed for this purpose, instead of delegating this important duty to a staff officer, according to general custom. His careful attention to this detail of service produced results of great value, especially in the campaign in the Shenandoah Valley and that which resulted in the surrender of Lee's



army, during which the efficiency of the scouts employed and the accuracy and extent of information obtained far surpassed any similar work performed in the other armies.

While he did not devote much time to details, and so long as duty properly performed did not interfere with the work of his subordinates, he was a master of every branch of the service, and was careful to observe that all duties were faithfully and thoroughly fulfilled. Wherever he served, the troops under his command were remarked for their excellent condition and the abundant supplies with which they were provided, never having to complain of privation, suffering, or want that could be avoided by the care and attention of their commander. Wide experience as quartermaster and commissary before and in the first year of the war had made him familiar with the questions of transportation and supply, and thus rendered it easy to observe that these important requisites for the welfare of troops were properly attended to.

In all operations he was deliberate and prudent in forming plans, and always had a definite objective in view, but never limited himself to a single method of accomplishing the result he desired, but allowed to subordinates and to himself a wide discretion in executing the required duty. A check, or even a decided repulse at any one point, never disheartened or discouraged him, and he was always prepared with resources and expedients to overcome the one or avoid the consequences of the other, and to pursue upon new lines the enterprise that could not be accomplished upon those first devised.

Sheridan was exceedingly reticent concerning

plans and operations to be undertaken, and while availing himself of all information that he could obtain from every source, never sought the counsel or advice of his subordinates or endeavored to divide the responsibility for whatever action he might take. His courage was moral to as great a degree as it was physical, and in the most adverse circumstances his mind worked as clearly and his untiring energy was displayed as promptly to change reverse into victory as though Fortune had smiled upon him from the first.

Confident always in himself and the troops he commanded, he was decided and firm in the execution of his own plans, and determined to carry them out by every means within his power. Believing his own views to be correct, and warranted in so believing by past success, he never hesitated to impart them to his superiors, and not unfrequently succeeded in having his own plans concurred in in place of others that had been suggested, and generally, if not always, to the advantage of the service to be performed.

To his subordinate officers he was considerate and eminently just. He recognized and appreciated faithful service, and especially that which was energetically and promptly rendered, and never blamed or harshly criticised any who met defeat or repulse from causes that were beyond their own control; but to those whose failures might result from neglect, carelessness, or want of energy and effort, he was severe, and never overlooked or pardoned conduct of this character, and neither personal friendship nor previous good records would prevent the just consequences of such faults.

In some sketches of General Sheridan's life that

were made public at the time of, and soon after the war, great stress was laid upon what was termed his "dash," and to many the impression was given that he was but a hard-riding, hard-fighting, and reckless soldier, whose fame and success were due to desperate personal courage and impulsive combativeness, which, aided by exceptional good fortune, had obtained for him rank and distinction. No estimate of his character could be more erroneous than this, for his earlier service was in the hotly contested, bloody, and indecisive battles of the Western army under Buell and Rosecrans, where his duties were generally those of holding a defensive position and offering a stubborn resistance under discouraging circumstances to an advancing and partially successful enemy; and his further operations, especially when possessing an independent command, resulted from well-prepared and carefully executed plans, varied, of course, by the changing necessities of a campaign. The same erroneous impression apparently existed in the mind of an eminent English military critic, who, while commending his career, refers to him as a mere cavalry officer, knowing so little of his subject as to be unaware that during the three years of active service that General Sheridan passed in the civil war he was engaged but eight months as a commander of mounted troops alone.

That he did possess energy and dash is unquestionable and was often proved, and it would have been well for the country that at times other officers in high commands had displayed these to the same degree. These qualities were not alone those that fitted him for the service he performed, but, added to judgment, patience, industry, and full knowledge of

all the duties of a commander and a soldier, rendered him deserving of the distinction he won. On the field of battle and in the pursuit of a retreating enemy he was conspicuous for untiring aggressiveness, and never lost an opportunity of success by failing to fight hard when needed, or follow up an advantage that had been gained. The troops he commanded always fought with good hope of success, for they were assured that their chief was actively sharing in their dangers, and that every movement, if not immediately led, was personally directed and carefully observed by him.

He was never a pedantic student of so-called military science, nor one who believed that campaigns were to be conducted with a close adherence to fixed rules—as a game in which skill and intellectual attainment are the only requirements of success. He was familiar with the few important principles that are of primary importance in all military operations, but natural ability and experience in the field had shown him that these were not to be used as a limitation of action, but as a means of obtaining results, and to be used, developed, or modified as the circumstances attending their application might require. Two rules he adhered to strictly and under all circumstances, and these were, always to act offensively and to be the attacking party, and to follow to the utmost extent any advantage that might be gained, and never to relax or abandon a pursuit so long as a beaten enemy was within reach and no new conditions of relative force had occurred, for he always insisted that after a hard-fought battle, no matter how great the loss or extreme the exhaustion, the victors were and must always, both physically

and morally, be the superiors of the conquered, and to a far greater degree than they were at the commencement of the engagement.

Of the personal character of General Sheridan it may well be said that any reader can form a just conception of it by studying attentively the story of his career. While he was prudent, reserved, and reticent to a marked degree on all subjects connected with his official duties, in all other respects he was singularly frank, open, and undisguised in expressing his opinions and feelings. Throughout his whole career he was genial, cordial, and kind to all who merited his esteem, and at all times eager to serve and assist any friend or comrade who might appeal to him for aid. He possessed the power of winning and retaining the confidence and attachment of those with whom he was brought into close association, and of the thousands whom he commanded or with whom he was associated during the war, there were very few of any degree who did not ever regard him with respect and personal devotion. When the close of the war permitted him to travel and opened a wider circle of acquaintance, he was everywhere, in this country and abroad, cordially received and welcomed, and many who were first attracted to him as a distinguished soldier, to know whom was an honor, soon observed his personal worth, and learned to value him as a friend. Few, if any, men of this country have left a larger circle of attached friends to mourn their loss.

Like all men who have through their own efforts attained great success and power over others, his will was strong and, when once determined, inflexible, but never to the point of obstinacy or against

the dictates of reason. On all subjects he was eager for information, and willing to receive and act upon it if valuable, from whatever source it might come, even though it might cause a change in views he had previously entertained. His feelings and passions were also strong, but he had carefully trained himself to use and not to be mastered by them, and very rarely displayed intensity of feeling upon any subject in which he might be interested. His manner and speech were quiet and restrained, and especially so on occasions of peculiar trial and responsibility, and in the hottest or most critical period of an engagement he was remarkable for the calm, concise, and accurate manner in which his instructions were given and his personal movements made ; but if occasion required him to exhibit personal activity or excite enthusiasm in others, this was done to the fullest extent, but never permitted to cause loss of self-control. He rarely, if ever, displayed bad temper, and the severest censure or rebuke that he might be called upon to give was delivered in a few well-chosen words and with no evidence of passion or personal feeling. The same quietness of manner marked the achievement of the greatest successes that he obtained, and he was never observed on these occasions to display any feeling of exultation or self-consciousness, nor did he ever issue congratulatory orders to his troops upon the favorable results of an action or a campaign. He considered that the defeat of an enemy was but the simple and legitimate duty of a soldier, and that no particular commendation was due to men who had performed the service for which they had enlisted. Especial instances of gallantry and good conduct, however, he was quick



to recognize and reward, and did his utmost to obtain promotion and secure distinction to all who were remarked for meritorious service.

After the war had closed and a peaceful future put an end to all prospect of further activity or distinction in his profession, General Sheridan remained in temperament, disposition, and habit the same as he had been in the days of more active service, performing thoroughly and with perfect satisfaction such work as fell to him to do, neither seeking other and more distinguished labors nor dissatisfied with those that occupied his time. He had no desire to obtain or accumulate money, and had as little interest as experience in affairs of business in which he was never concerned. He took no other interest in politics than that which is natural to every patriotic citizen who is interested in the welfare and proper government of his country, and his utter indifference to the honors or rewards of public office, outside of his chosen profession, was so well known that his name was never discussed or even suggested as that of a candidate for the high office that has tempted other distinguished soldiers to abandon the experience and training of a lifetime and assume laborious and trying duties of a nature differing as widely as possible from those they had previously performed with honor and credit.

In person Sheridan was of low stature, and early in life of slight physique. He describes himself, in 1864, when he came from the West to take command of the cavalry in the Army of the Potomac, at the age of thirty-three, as being five feet five inches in height and weighing but one hundred and fifteen pounds. Slight, however, as he appeared, he pos-

essed great bodily strength, and a remarkable ability to support, without strain or fatigue, continued and severe physical labor and the constant cares and anxieties that resulted from the duties to which he was devoted. He was an excellent horseman and always well mounted, and when in the field and aroused by the excitement of combat his presence was commanding and inspiring. In his later years, and especially after his removal to Washington had condemned him to a somewhat inactive life, he became quite stout, but never lost the air, the bearing, or the presence of a soldier, and no stranger who might see him could even entertain a doubt concerning his profession.

He was an excellent shot and a skilled and persevering huntsman, and found in field sports his highest enjoyment; and these, with the pleasures he found in his happy domestic circle and the society of his many and warm friends, occupied the time that he could spare from official duty, and he had every reason to look forward to a long, prosperous, and happy life as a reward of the labors and dangers through which he had gained his well-earned repose. These hopes were, however, dispelled when he was struck down by the blow that assailed him when he was in what to a man of his exceptional vigor may be called the prime of life, and he passed away lamented with inexpressible sorrow by his family and friends, and mourned for by the nation to whose service his life had been devoted.



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